

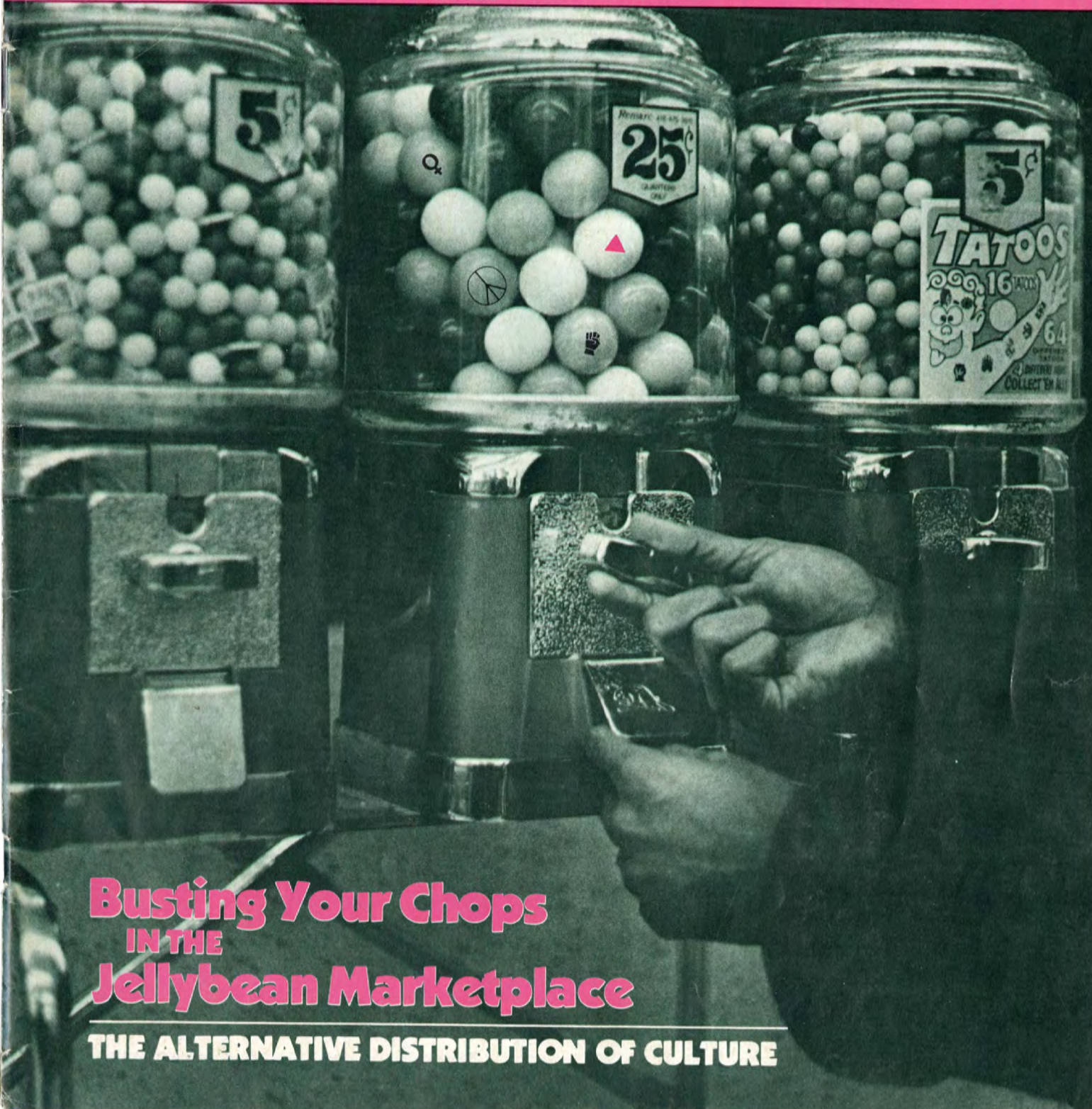
NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983 \$2.50 THE CULTURAL NEWSMAGAZINE

FUSE

*THE MORAL LEPERS TALK
FEMINISM & THE MUSIC SCENE*

*NOT JUST THE NITTY GRITTY
INTERVIEW — OSCAR BROWN JR.*

*FEMINIST REVOLUTION
LIZZIE BORDEN'S BORN IN FLAMES*



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FUSE

VOLUME VII NUMBER 4
 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983

COVER: Design by John Greyson. Photograph by Ric Amis. Hands courtesy Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta

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FUSE is published five times a year (includes one double issue) by Arton's Publishing Inc., a non-profit artist organization (Parachute Center for Cultural Affairs Society). Our offices are located at 379 Adelaide St. W., Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5V 1S5. (416) 368-6227. All newstand inquiries should be sent to this address. Second Class mail registration No. 4455. Copyright © 1983 Arton's Publishing Inc. All rights reserved under International Copyright Union. Copyright is shared equally between the authors and the publishers. Any reproduction without permission is prohibited. Arton's Publishing assumes no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Manuscripts not accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope will not be returned. Publication of an advertisement in FUSE does not include endorsement of the advertiser by magazine. Opinions expressed outside of specifically marked editorials are not necessarily held by each and every individual member of the editorial group. Subscription rates: Individual \$12.00 per year; Institutions, \$18.00 per year (in Canada only). For U.S. and elsewhere add \$3.00. Decision regarding who qualifies as individual subscriber remain the right of the publisher. Printed in Canada. ISSN 0226-8086. FUSE acknowledges partial assistance from the Canada Council, the Ontario Arts Council and the many hours of volunteer and partially paid labour which are provided by everyone listed on our masthead.



SNAKES & LADDERS



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The Lessons of Great Men

The review by Julian Samuel, "The Great Man Theory of History, Richard Attenborough's Gandhi" (Summer) fails to discuss what the film does, and instead, criticizes it as bad history or because "it is far from a cinema of opposition". In discussing *Gandhi* as history, Samuel makes the mistake of accepting Attenborough's position, that he is making a film about history. What he is then left to argue is only its merits, is it good history or bad? Although Samuel rightly points out that Gandhi and the Congress Party facilitated a transfer of power from the British bourgeoisie to the Indian bourgeoisie, why should he expect that analysis from Attenborough? Samuel also criticizes the director for failing to demystify Gandhi. This is odd because it is not the intent of this film to demystify. Attenborough is, after all, a filmmaker who works in the interest of the upper class, his class. It is in the interest of his class to enrich the myth of our dependence on the Great Man.

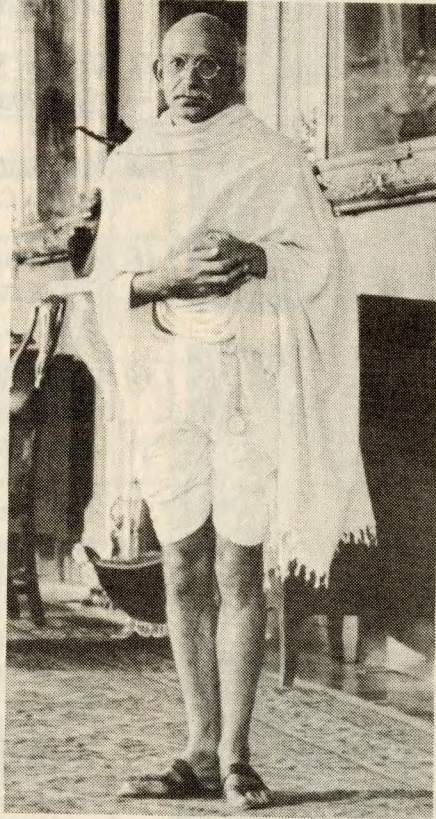
My point is this, *Gandhi* is not history and Attenborough is not an historian. The film is myth and Attenborough is this myth maker. The myth is the Great Man. This myth significantly contributes to an ideology which grants to bosses, politicians and teachers their authority. Recognizing this film as bourgeois propaganda is difficult because *Gandhi* (and other superfilms) is able to present itself with such cinemagraphic charm and splendor.

Because *Gandhi* uses such an array of techniques our struggle to protest and resist is difficult. We need the attentive assistance of film reviewers on the left who do not try to think for us, but encourage our own critical thinking and suggest possible political actions. If the reviewer simply points out that the multinational studios are not distributing historical dramas with a socialist analysis the reviewer's work is mostly useless. The Great (Hollywood) Men are not the ones who will present and interpret our class history.

Taking my point that *Gandhi* is not history but oppressive myth I wish to do more than criticize Samuel in this letter. It is the film which should be the focus of our concern.

Four concrete distortions set up the myth. First, the script does not use the language spoken by Gandhi. Attenborough's *Gandhi* speaks Attenborough's language. Second, the film completely distorts the well documented fact that Gandhi was a tyrant in his own home. Gandhi of India began his politics at the front door of his house, as most Great Men do. Third,

COURTESY COLUMBIA PICTURES



Ben Kingsley as the Great Myth

the film is overtly racist. An obvious example of this is in the order of the credits. Indian actors take all the major supporting roles, white superstars, however, receive the first billings. Fourth, the film is sexist. Women have no role in the film other than to serve or carry the Master. These distortions present one aspect of the myth; only the upper class, white-bronzed males are important and only their public lives count.

What else does this film want us to think? In part, a conversation I had with my eleven year old daughter, Sarah, after we left the cinema, addresses this question:

Howard: How did you like it?

Sarah: It's great!

Howard: Why?

Sarah: It tells you a lot about Gandhi and India.

Howard: What does it tell you about Gandhi?

Sarah: He was really brave.

Howard: Can you be brave like that?

Sarah: No.

Howard: Why not?

Sarah: Because he never gave up. He kept fighting for what he believed in. I'm not like him. He was really brave.

Howard: I've seen you stand up for what you believe in even if you get hurt. You've done that more than once.

Sarah: But that's different. He was really important.

Attenborough had three hours in Dolby Sound and 70mm. I had 30 minutes in a noisy truck. Sarah got a lesson about a dominant social class that distorts her reality and renames her experiences. The film is not a failure. I wish it were.

Gandhi was produced for financial and ideological profit. Given the long line-ups, the dialogue with Sarah, and the comments I keep hearing (including those of social activists) Attenborough has made both financial and ideological gains for his class. *Gandhi* succeeds as ideological profit when it works to make people believe they are powerless. It serves the interest of those who control when we are encouraged to believe in the Great Man. The myth is that the Great Man will lead us because he should lead us. He has this right because he knows the true meaning of love, justice, truth . . . The Great Man knows what is significant and what is trivial. Great Men are men. Great Men are white. Great Men are heterosexual. Great Men are educated.

We, the people, are presented as riotous, untrustworthy . . . We live in crowds. We legitimize the Great Man with our senseless cheers. We are faceless, and, as is well documented in *Gandhi*, we are impulsive. Over and over again we begin riots for reasons as slight as someone throwing a rock. When we feel fear or remorse we need the Great Man to resolve our moral and political dilemmas.

This completes the myth. Only the

Continued on page 135

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Culture And Other Imperialisms

JOYCE MASON

THIS WEEK THE U.S.A. INVADED Grenada. The Canadian people continue to protest against their government's decision to test the Cruise missile, and against the government's lack of concern or responsibility for women's issues. The C.I.A. continues its attempts to forge an alliance between various 'contras' (from the extreme right wing to the liberal right wing) in order to overthrow the Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Slandorous right-wing and hate-mongering statements from the President of the United States are quoted in the papers every day and sensationalized in headlines, without comment.

I have been to more demonstrations and marches in the last year that I care to count. And quite frankly I find them increasingly depressing and frustrating. Not that I will stop going, but like everyone else, I do want more from demonstrations than their sense of comradeship. I want things to change!

In the context of these thoughts, I would like to raise the issue of American cultural imperialism and how this dominant "international" culture serves and protects the interests of both economic and military imperialism. (The later being forces that are not uniquely American.)

The impact of consumer advertising on mass culture is staggering. Variations on the themes of the American dream, as it is now represented in popular culture are centred around pleasure — but it is the pleasure of power and money. The call for 'freedom' has been reduced to one primary choice: you may choose these goals (power and money) as your own, or suffer the consequences. In keeping with the Judeo-Christian ethics which are at the core of most western ideological systems, we are refused multiplicity — systems of diverse and simultaneous values that might function to balance the desire

for power and its rationale of being right.

And so, those governments which put forward as priorities, a practice of working to eliminate human suffering, exploitation, illiteracy, and disease within their borders, become enemies of the 'free world'; while oppressive militarised regimes are given complete endorsement simply by virtue of setting up some ballot boxes. Endorsement means, of course, military and economic aid. (How tidy! Sounds almost like power and money!) "Democracy" (both the ideal and the word itself) has been subverted. Democracy, as it is currently used by the West, is merely a pay-off: "We'll give each of you a vote; you give us the power."

In countries such as El Salvador and South Africa the contradictions are readily apparent to most, but European and North American systems of 'democracy' are guilty of more than

legitimizing oppression in III World countries. The hierarchy of the electorate (bottom) and the elected (top) is obvious, for example, when we consider that current court battles over the constitutionality of a cabinet decision (to test the Cruise missile) in Canada are seen in many quarters as a *threat* to the parliamentary system of democracy.

These kinds of contradictions have been pointed to before in FUSE and no doubt will be again. A particular and recent example was a poem from Gil Scott Heron (Sept/Oct '83, p.115):

...
I had said I wasn't gonna write no more poems like this.
But the dogs are in the street.
It's a turn around world where things all too quickly turn around.
It was turned around so that right looked wrong.
It was turned around so that up looked down.
It was turned around so that those

"Don't be alarmed. We found out there was an American citizen here and we decided to come and preserve your life and property." (translation)
—Barricada, Nicaragua, 22 August 1983



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who marched in the streets with Bibles and signs of peace became enemies of the State and risks to National Security. So that those who questioned the operations of those in authority on the principles of justice, liberty and equality became the vanguard of a communist attack. It became so you couldn't call a spade a motherfuckin' spade.

(1978)

How do we turn around the 'turn around'? I look around at our 'alternative' political and cultural organisations. I recognize that most of us are dependent on government monies. And so, I wonder whether our 'oppositional' organisations merely provide a buffer — a protective cushion between the 'malcontents' and the powerful. It is certain that we have no real access to the primary modes of communication or decision making. Strategies for change are limited to preparing briefs for government committees, staging demonstrations which can be covered in 10 to 60 second spots on the national or local TV news and organising ourselves into structures which will

meet the guidelines and the set priorities for funding — both public and private (corporate) sources of money.

All this may seem cynical and somewhat hopeless. And certainly this last example is not *absolutely* true... organisations do, in many instances, set their own priorities and define their own needs. The degree to which these priorities are predetermined by or reinterpreted to fit official policies (government or corporate) does vary greatly. But it is important to remember that *decisions* regarding the degree to which needs will be met and the conditions of their endorsement as 'legitimate' and 'worthy' remain, *in all instances*, outside the direct community of the 'needy'.

Access to power for most of us lies solely in our ability to use language subversively — that is our ability to persuade the powerful, with their own rhetoric, to favour our goals. Much may be lost in translation.

In this issue of FUSE there are a number of articles that relate indirectly to some of the issues that I raise here. Certainly the section devoted to distribution of alternative culture is one. The reviews of *Flashdance* and

Born in Flames provide good examples respectively, of how ideology and systems of power are reproduced culturally and how they might be subverted. "Pop goes the Culture!" delinates the process of co-option of 'revolutionary pleasures' into mainstream commercialism. Other pieces are more direct celebrations of a cultural practice which is vital and engaged, such as the poetry of Dionne Brand. But these, within the current systems for the distribution of culture, will never reach their full possibilities in terms of audience.

Future issues of FUSE will continue this examination of distribution models, and offer criticism of cultural production from the pop to the sublime. We also plan to examine the nature of our own institutions, as cultural producers.

For those who may still wonder what the U.S. invasion of Grenada, cruise missiles tests, corporate imperialism, etc., have to do with cultural production, distribution or funding, I apologise. I have, in this editorial, perhaps been more allusive than conclusive, but my intention has been to raise questions. Many people are asking these questions, I do not prescribe them but demand recognition for their importance and validity.

Sidling up beside the men in power *can* get you ahead (though there are no guarantees of this). On the other hand, demanding change won't make you many more enemies — just more powerful ones. But even within our cultural communities splits occur when questions are raised. Recently, in *Now* magazine, Peter Lynch of *Video Culture Canada* sternly dismissed criticism and questioning of the structure and priorities of this festival as the "village politics" of "people who are... too scared to break out of their rut". He managed to imply that anyone who dared to question the festival or who didn't want to take part was afraid of the international exposure and comparison.

This kind of justification by dismissal is disheartening for everyone and it is not limited to the video community. I can offer three possible responses: maybe we are members of a different "internationale", or in the words of Oscar Brown Jr., "Yeah, I'm stuck", or finally a short lesson in perspective from Lynne Fernie, "It might look like a rut from out there, but from down here it looks like the trenches."

—Joyce Mason

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TPB's Final Acquittal

The High Cost of Winning . . . Again

TORONTO — A County Court judge has upheld the acquittal of *The Body Politic*, a national gay newsmagazine, on charges of "using the mails to transmit immoral or indecent material". Judge Patricia German ruled September 14 that the trial judge was correct to have acquitted Pink Triangle Press, the non-profit corporation that publishes *The Body Politic*, of the seven-year-old charges.

"I am satisfied that the learned trial judge (Provincial Court Judge Thomas Mercer) applied the proper test and did not err in fact or in law and the appeal is dismissed", wrote German.

The charges relate to the 1977 article "Men Loving Boys Loving Men" by Gerald Hannon, the third in a series of articles, exploring youth sexuality. *The Body Politic* was first charged in January 1978 following a three-hour police raid on the magazine's offices. First acquitted in February 1979, the

case was appealed by the Attorney General and the County Court ordered a re-trial. The re-trial order was subsequently appealed and upheld by both the Ontario Court of Appeals, and The Supreme Court of Canada.

The second trial took place in June 1982 and resulted in the second verdict of not guilty for Pink Triangle Press, and its three officers, Gerald Hannon, Edward Jackson, and Ken Popert. Judge Mercer found that although the article "advocated pedophilia", it did not exceed the community's standards of tolerance and was thus not immoral or indecent. Ironically, the precedent used by judges to determine immorality and indecency comes from the first trial of *The Body Politic* on these same charges.

Ontario Attorney General Roy McMurtry subsequently appealed this second acquittal prompting public outrage, and the charge from TBP's lawyer, Clayton Ruby, that the case

was "the most appealed summary conviction [minor charge] in Canadian legal history."

It seems unlikely that McMurtry will appeal the most recent acquittal. He told an interviewer on CBC radio September 14 that his intention was "to clarify the law" and not to harass the magazine. "I regret as much as anyone that the matter went on as long as it did" he explained. The deadline for the Crown to appeal is October 14.

To date, *The Body Politic* has raised more than \$100,000 to cover legal costs and they are still several thousand dollars short of being able to pay the final bill. Donations can be sent to *The Body Politic Free the Press Foundation*, Box 7289, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. M5W 1X9.

—Craig Patterson

Pro-Choice

TORONTO — October 1, 1983 saw pro-choice groups from across Canada gather for a *Day of Action for Choice on Abortion*. Groups joined together in a commitment to the 'right to choose' and the legislation of free-standing abortion clinics.

In Toronto the pro-choice rally was held at City Hall, where the speeches and telegrams of support were reinforced and punctuated by music and agit-prop performance. *The Red Berets'* political message coupled with the energetic music of (*The Parachute Club* members) Lorraine Segato, Lauri Conger and Billy Bryans seemed designed to buoy the crowd for the march through downtown Toronto. But before the march, there was the "First Annual Birth Control Pledge-a-thon" performed by *The Anonymous Theatre Group* — perhaps the highlight of the day. These four women, having taken their performance name "because the work of women is too often anonymous", began their performance with an 'intimate chat' with the crowd about the dangers of some of the current birth control products on the market. Because current means of contraception are neither sufficiently safe nor completely effective, these women concluded that without access to abortion the only real alternative is abstinence. Holding various contraceptive devices high in the air they chanted in unison "We pledge to abstain from sexual intercourse with any man

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COURTESY BODY POLITIC



OCTOBER 1, 1983: While anti-abortionists bus in their flocks at Queens Park, pro-choicers demonstrate at Toronto's City Hall

until we have access to safe legal abortion clinics."

While the day focused on the current and particular battle for the legislation of free-standing clinics and the removal of abortion from the criminal code, the roots of "choice" were strongly evident. As Carolyn Egan explained, "The struggle for choice has historically encompassed more than just the right to choose an abortion. The struggle has always meant the right to decide when and if to have children, the right to safe and effective birth control, the right to support services such as child care and parental leave and the right to determine our own sexuality as women. The right to control our bodies is fundamental to the liberation of women."

Pro-choice groups have worked hard through the past year to broaden the base of support for these demands. And The Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL) which sponsored the Day, has seen new chapters form and old chapters reform. The hundreds of groups which exist to support choice on abortion and the many individuals who are unaffiliated but who show up at the rallies and write letters to the government are ever growing in numbers. But the struggle is not an easy one and the forces of the opposition are strong.

In Toronto on the same day the anti-abortion lobby also held a rally — bus-ing in thousands of people, primarily from church groups throughout southern Ontario. Continued efforts will have to be made by that majority of Canadians who agree that choice should be left to a woman and her doctor, if their views are to be heeded by the law

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makers.

Writing briefs to the government, lobbying, education, demonstrations and court cases have been part of the pro-choice strategy to date yet unfortunately the best hope for change was voiced by Laura Sabia, "If every male politician and every priestly celibate became pregnant, abortion laws would be changed tomorrow morning."

—Lisa Freedman

Of Partings and Last Words

MONTREAL — On September 21st at the *Canada Council's* September quarterly meeting, Mavor Moore (Chairman of the Canada Council since 1979) announced his resignation. It seemed to be a fitting occasion to release the Council's response to the Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee — especially given Moore's caveat in his foreword to the booklet, which reads: "[This] paper accordingly contains few novel insights or newly discovered points of view."

For those who persevere through the text, searching for the answer to the question, "Whose fault is this lack of originality?", the answer comes at the end, under the heading, "Coda" (i.e.: we've heard it before). The Council decided to, "leave the last word not to an artist, but to an economist: Lord Keynes, first Chairman of the Arts Council of Great Britain: "Everyone, I fancy, recognizes that the work of the artist in all its aspects is, of its nature, individual and free, undisciplined,

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unregimented, uncontrolled. The artist walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction; he does not know it himself. But he leads the rest of us into fresh pastures and teaches us to love and to enjoy what we often begin by rejecting, enlarging our sensibility and purifying our instincts . . ."

Aside from the fact that the tone of this quote might lead one to believe that Lord Keynes, and the Canada Council in seconding that emotion, would rather that the Roman Catholic Church take over responsibility for artists (this may come from the mistaken impression that we are capable of multiplying loaves and fishes) this little tidbit tells us many things. One is that cultural bureaucrats, including those present at the *Applebert Commission*, are more attuned to what economists have to say than they are to what artists do — this may have something to do with the use of cultural appointments as a kind of political remuneration similar to, but more permanently damaging than, honorary degrees given by universities. Another is that although Applebert pretended to listen to Canadians and their culture, somehow the Council can't knock that colonialism out of their noggins and are still looking to the British House of Lords for guidance.

But perhaps there's hope for half of us, given that Keynes saw fit to use only the masculine singular in his little dictum. Who says chicks are no good, even if there are none in the House of Lords? Meanwhile, bye-bye Mavor, and thanks for the tips!

—Martha Fleming

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LETTERS, Continued from page 130

elite can plan, discuss, reason and show compassion. We can only react. We need the political and religious leaders, the bosses and the teacher. It is the lesson of history, Attenborough's history. This is *Gandhi*.

When film reviews help us to clarify what it is the superfilms like *Gandhi* construct for our oppression they help to empower us. If we are to fight our "depoliticization" we must fight the seductive forms of these films and the hidden content they present. Film reviews are an important part of the struggle.

—Howard S. Davidson
Toronto

Support the Erotic!

Last spring women from Womanspirit Gallery and the London Status of Women Action Group's pornography committee came together to collaborate on organizing a series of exhibitions, films, performances and panels concerning pornography/erotica/censorship. Our intention was to explore the questions raised by the recent debates, of which we have individually and collectively been deeply involved, and to provide an environment in which women artists, performers and writers could share and discuss their work on the subject.

We share Varda Burstyn's belief, as expressed in her recent article, "Art and Censorship" that artists "have a two-fold responsibility, having to do with artistic production on the one hand and political struggle on the other." She calls for "more works of an erotic nature which continue to explore and push further the barriers to gender equality and sexual ecstasy" and believes that we need "works that not only arouse but also enlighten, encouraging us to understand our own eroticism in a whole number of ways." Since most western so-called "erotic" art which is available is produced by men, society has had virtually no access to women's view of eroticism. The purpose of our project was to provide the space for women to exhibit and perform their erotic works and create an environment where public discussion could occur. We believe that images made by women are crucial to a full public

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983

discussion of this issue.

An application to the Ontario Arts Council to assist us with funding was rejected on the grounds that this subject is not a priority for the Council. In our view the O.A.C. ought to reconsider their priorities in light of today's issues and concerns. It seems ludicrous that in a period of intense exploration of issues such as pornography and erotica, when one cannot turn on the radio without hearing discussions of this nature, that our Canadian cultural agencies do not recognize or choose to ignore the contribution they must make to this discussion.

As Ms. Burstyn has pointed out, because the sanctions against women producing erotic material are so great, we will need more than a commitment from individual artists in order to begin a useful dialogue of the subject.

—Jane Buyers
Gillian Chase
Brenda Ingrata
Gail Hutchinson
Sasha McInnes Hayman
Womanspirit and LSWAG

Crediting Our Own

I was pleased to see mention of Avis Lang's cartoon show, "Pork Roasts" which was a part of the *Women Building Culture Festival* (FUSE, Sept/Oct '83). I was also happy to note that you used a Canadian cartoon from the exhibition catalogue to illustrate the article. Since it is Canadian, however, it would have been nice to give it a full credit line — both for the artist, Jeannie Kamins, and the publication, *Room of One's Own*.

But FUSE is a remarkable and unique publication. Keep it up.

—Eleanor Wachtel
Growing Room Collective,
Vancouver, B.C.

The Old Lies

Years ago I had a feeling something like this would happen. (Ad, inside cover, FUSE FALL '83). When I was digging up data on the Bronfman holdings for Peter Newman's book (and I can't tell you how irritated I am at the probability that your ad writer used some of it), every Jewish source of information worried about the

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same thing: Publish the truth about the extent of the Bronfman clout, and people would start believing the old lies about Jews.

Sure enough. A hefty portfolio of booze, oil, real estate, and the rest, is deftly transformed into — "you name it, we own it" — control of the economy. With the help of the Rothschilds too. Give me a break.

Let's see. Should we make them part of the Zionist conspiracy or just the basic Jewish capitalist conspiracy. Well, it's true that the Bronfmans have raised money for Israel. But wait! Cadillac Fairview carried on even after all those Metro apartments were sold — to the Arabs. It's all so confusing.

Your anti-capitalist, anti-Apartheid ad was very little of either and was anti-Semitic instead. Too bad. It ruined a great issue of FUSE.

—Susan G. Cole
Toronto

To the Advertiser

THAT AD PUBLISHED ON THE inside cover of the last issue of FUSE has certainly made an impression in the community. No one had yet made that last crucial link between the Jewish conspiracy and apartheid. Now that it's finally out we can really begin our analysis. Problem is, not everyone was totally convinced by the piece. Some think that you succumbed to old-fashioned, paranoid anti-Semitism and its attendant irrational/illogical methods of pronouncing guilt. And although some can't see what the sinful drink, the Yom Kippur War, or even more important facts like a Jewish marriage, have to do with "moving" (which could mean just about anything) arms to South Africa, they are working on it.

What's wrong with trying to show that Jews try to pass by rubbing elbows with infamous gentiles in one paragraph and suggesting in the next that when it comes to real loyalties — like marriage — they keep it all to themselves? Poetry is a useful device; it helps us to see what you were really getting at: not only are the Bronfmans responsible for supporting apartheid with money that they earn from our ineluctable consumption of their products, but they're typical Jews too.

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Sex Role Stereotyping

Commercials, Kids and Common Predictions

LISA STEELE

IN NORTH AMERICA. IN 1983, in the fall, the children are going back to school. And as my daughter has just turned three, I have begun to watch for signs: what is being said to little girls about their future economic possibilities, their gender identities, their social roles; what are they being told they can and can't do. I want to know, quite simply, what I'm up against as the parent of a rapidly-becoming-socialized little girl.

The catalyst for my interest in the media's image of girls and young women was Letty Pogrebin's book *Growing Up Free: raising your child in the 80's*. Pogrebin, a founder of *Ms.* magazine and consultant on the *Free To Be, You and Me* materials, has written a handbook of non-sexist childrearing.

I'll admit that the first 200 pages of the book seemed pretty basic to me — feminist analysis geared to a mass (and unconverted) audience of parents; analysis which is primarily humanist and egalitarian in its outlook and intention. Then Pogrebin enters an infinitely more complicated part of the discussion around sexism and childrearing: namely how the gender of the parent (or person) involved in any interaction with a child affects how the child interprets this interaction, and how this interaction is, in turn, also effected by the gender of the child who has already been subjected to sex-role training from birth from the culture outside of the family. She admits that, "Parents can only do so much, in the face of so many other cultural forces, to assure that gender is not an impediment or a burden to their children", but suggests a kind of intra-family affirmative action for children of both sexes; actively encouraging in girls what the society suppresses and the same for boys in an effort to counteract the crushing

power which acculturation plays in children's lives.

No Cause for Optimism

So I began to look at the mass media to see what is being said to children in relation to gender. I will admit that I feel fairly competent in judging material from a feminist perspective. I mean I know a sexist ad or story-line in a sit-com. When it

FEMINISM IN THE MEDIA

came to examining material geared to kids, for some reason I had assumed that a profound improvement would have occurred within the last decade of intense feminist media critiques. My optimism, it turns out, was not grounded in the reality of television. And television plays a powerful role in the socialization of most children in North America.

Take *Sesame Street* for example. As programming for pre-schoolers, it is exemplary compared to most other kids' shows. But even *Sesame Street* has done little to redress the criticism which surfaced in the late '70s around the lack of female presence on the show. Granted, there are now more women actors. But there have been few female additions to the cast of what, to the kids, are the 'real people' of *Sesame Street* — the puppets. There's still no female equivalent to Kermit the Frog or Big Bird or the Cookie Monster and no female buddy pair like the inimitable Bert and Ernie. The little girls watching the show have to be content with a couple of girl Twiddle Bugs and a female cousin to Oscar the Grouch, who comes com-

plete with a pink bow in her hair, as their gender representatives in the 'fun' parts of the show.

Other programmes geared to the pre-school set are worse when it comes to acknowledging women's presence. Mr. Rogers has a constant stream of visitors, but other than the occasional cook or woman who comes in to install new drapes in his bungalow, few of them are women. Only men are shown performing the real neat jobs in life — flying model airplanes, repairing bicycles and installing the plumbing. Mr. Rogers' specialty is a rather insipid earnestness and a lot of emphasis on being "neighborly". While these may be admirable traits to encourage in children, his programme does almost nothing to build an awareness in his young viewers that "women hold up half the sky".

My point here is that even if you're careful with your kid's TV diet when they're little — no commercial network viewing, no adult programmes — even if you carefully monitor what is watched and what isn't, there's a good chance that by the time they are 'ready' (is anybody ever ready for television?) for full-blown viewing of mass media, commercials and all, they will already have a pretty good idea of what is "right" and what isn't in terms of gender assigned objects and activities. And they will have become accustomed to the absence of women's authoritative presence. In other words, they will have been prepared to face the world — as presented in the mass media — on its own sexist terms.

Commercials: Propagandizing Cultural Traditions

It's not news that commercials provide a constant stream of encoded messages



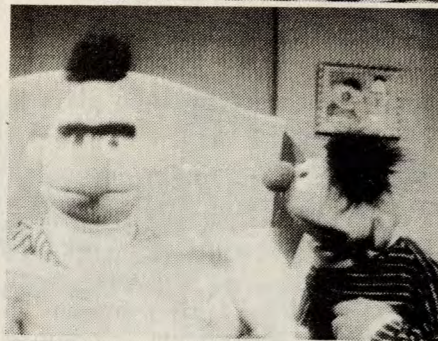
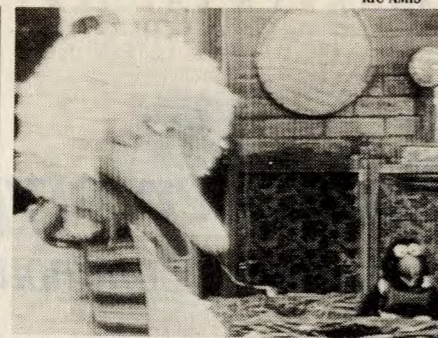
What's Wrong With This Picture?

The above illustration by Ron Watts appeared in the most recent *Toronto Life* (Oct. 1983) in conjunction with an article entitled "Should you buy your kid a computer?" The values, message and gender-bias of this photograph are quite straightforward: little boys are interested in and obtain gratification from home computers. These machines will initiate them into the preserves of male knowledge by engaging them in rituals which are 'gender appropriate'. By visually equating the computer with baseball, the photograph quite succinctly infers that the patriarchal lines of power will remain unchallenged in the 'new' information age. The only curiosity of this photo is that it actually contradicts — or ignores — the content of the article which it is supposed to illustrate. The article, by David Humphreys, is a consumer guide to software for kids which uses the author's eight year-old daughter as an example of how much kids — not just boys — can learn from computers. The little girl, incidentally, is capable of writing her own programmes on the home unit she has access to.

to all television viewers. What surprises me was how little impact the feminist criticism of stereotyping has had on ads directed at (or featuring) children and young people. The following ads are just a sampling of what's present in large doses every day on television.

- a commercial for laundry detergent featuring little boys dirtying their clothes by skidding down the hill on their knees while the little girl in the group spills ice cream down the front of her hopelessly frilly dress. Mom, of course, looks on approvingly at the gender-appropriate activities of her progeny, knowing that she can meet the challenge of dirt aided by the manufacturer's 'miracle' product. The message for children: boys move around vigorously with obvious disregard for the consequences — dirty clothes — while girls watch and get dirty only by accident. And mothers (read *women*) are personally responsible for all laundry-related affairs (read *housework*).

- an ad from Sears for little girls clothing which opens with a 7 or 8 year old girl on the baseball field. She's dressed in jeans, t-shirt, sneakers and has a baseball cap on. This image lasts only a few seconds, as the voice-over (male) announces "It's time to get Susie ready to back to school." Cut to Susie and her proud Mom (who is clad in gender-appropriate skirt and heels) in the dressing room area of a Sears store. Here Susie is rapidly transformed from an active sports-loving child into (you guessed it) a "little girl", with not just one dress for a special occasion, but a complete wardrobe of frocks which will conspire to make her participation in anything other than jump rope impossible in the coming year. In the last seconds of this commercial, Mom indulgently allows Susie to retain her baseball cap as the single remnant of her active self which Susie must all but discard in her rush to gender-appropriate behaviour. The message to girls is short and sweet: summer's over, you're no longer needed on the team. The larger message, of course, must be well known to all children in North America. Most 'little Susies' will receive no encouragement to be physically active, to build their little bodies, to move for the sheer joy of it during childhood. It is a given within this culture that girls' bodies attain 'value' only after reaching sexual maturity; this 'value'



Big Bird, Bert & Ernie, and assorted monsters in this boys-club

is invested in all commodities, bodies being only one of many. Sex-role stereotyping perpetuates the dichotomy of active (read *male*) and passive (read *female*). So boys develop their bodies, (they do it through play and sports); while girls' bodies develop (it's something which happens to them). With this deeply engrained cultural tradition which excludes girls from the arena of physical activity — in the face of widespread interest in just such activity on the part of most female children — an ad such as the above from Sears should not just be labelled sexist, but rather as a piece of dangerous propaganda.

While the three preceding examples could perhaps be seen to be of little importance in light of an overall project for developing feminist consciousness in the mass media, the following ads, for high tech products are not so innocent:

- the "I adore my 64" ad for Commodore 64 home computer systems which features four men intently performing various functions on their systems including, composing a song, designing computer graphics, doing calculations and an Einstein look-alike who is said to be "scheming". Nestled comfortably within this all-male cast is one lone woman who is using her Commodore 64 as a kitchen aid. Dressed in out-dated kitchen wear, including a ruffled apron, she stands over her home terminal, spoon poised mid-air, reading (one assumes) her favorite recipe for chicken à la king off the display screen.

- an ad for the 'Commodore Vic-20 with the Edupack', a low-cost computer and software package, being pushed to the high school crowd. The camera pans along a brick wall, catching a full range of teen types — the brainy boy, the athlete, the punk — and each sells a different feature of the system. The girls — also types — are along only to present the software and carrying case to their respective mate.

- the commercial for Texas Instruments' home computer system which features a father with a small child on his lap sitting in front of the computer. The child's hand touches the keyboard as the voice-over says "He's only three and already he's reaching out."

As these ads are representative of the overall image which high-tech manufacturers are creating for their products, my little girl could be in trouble a few years down the road.

Considering some fairly common predictions about the next decade: that the current level of unemployment is not likely to fall much below the present figures of 12 to 14% (with fully 25% of youth 18-25 years old unemployed); that women will continue their current trend of being employed outside the home; that the only expanding field of employment is within the area of high technology. (Remember that women now earn an average of 61¢ for each dollar earned by male workers and this disparity has increased yearly for the past ten years.) Given these directions, if computer literacy continues to be defined in its public (advertising) face as another male preserve, the little girls of today will have to fight their way into what will have become another "non-traditional job" by the end of the century.

—Lisa Steele

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

The absence of viable distribution access for independently produced films, magazines, videotapes, records and books in Canada has a notorious and shameful history. While, for almost two decades, forms of cultural distribution have been in place which are 'alternate' or 'parallel' to the profit-oriented dissemination of industrialized culture, these alternatives continue to exist in an economic ghetto.

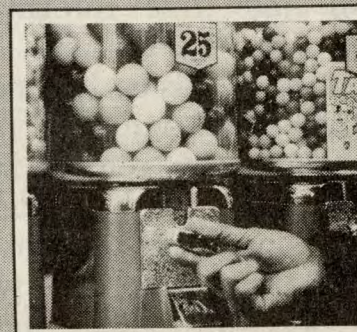
In response to this ghettoization, some umbrella distribution associations have attempted to develop 'partnerships of interest' with the mainstream distribution industry and most such ties, or their resulting agreements, are presented as symbols of progress. However, the effect of this 'progress' is usually so minimal that it serves more to reinforce the monumental nature of the problems facing independent distribution, than it works to solve or eliminate them. (For those interested in a further exploration of the relationships between industrial and independent cultural aspirations, see FUSE "Business and Culture", August/September 1981).

Beginning with this issue of FUSE we will be presenting a series of articles dealing with various aspects of the distribution of culture. We hope to provide some information on how things are, visions for the future and some of the specific things which people are doing to improve their situations. Production subsidies and income levels for most independent producers have not kept pace with the costs of production, leading in turn to an increasing need for distribution sources of income. In spite of all our wishes that these problems would just disappear, the ongoing deadlock in distribution does seriously affect the possible growth, and in some cases even the survival, of independent productions.

Clive Robertson

DISTRIBUTION OF THE CULTURE

FINDING YOUR WAY OUT OF THE GHETTO



HIGH SQUEALS & THE INAUDIBLE VOICE

Industrial video production is currently living through the "high-squeal" phase of Pay TV and home video. Revived entrepreneurs, with industry and media support, are financing "explorations", as if video products were buried in the Beaufort Sea and could be pumped down some pipeline at the rate of thousands of hours per week.

Independent video producers, who have been less than enthusiastic about this fabricated 'turn of events', have been castigated for "being afraid to show their work on television". But independent producers and artists *have* often tried to sell tapes and packages to domestic TV companies, and on rare occasions deals have been made. Frequently however even these deals do not result in broadcast, which — let's face it — somehow defeats the exercise.

Aside from this ongoing entertainment twaddle, independent video producers themselves have a history of devising and improving upon their own models of distribution.

Independent video distribution began at the end of the sixties in Canada, through free informational exchanges among producers and community groups. This early model became institutionalized with the first generation of video access centres. For a time the 'free exchange' model came into conflict with the next development: artist controlled distribution groups, which began to set rental and sales rates. Some of these

groups were modeled upon commercial galleries, with a 'stable' of producers, while others attempted to develop less infracompetitive structures. And so video distribution moved (or ambled) along... with some community/conference showings, some 'narrowcasting' experiments, cheap programming for public art galleries (with often humorous attempts at thematic exhibits), free cable programming and the occasional international showcase or serious library purchase.

But the rate of growth of existing display outlets did not increase in relation to the growth in the number of producers. Probably 95% of the potential 'market' (outside of broadcast) was not being serviced. Attempts at enhancing the 'profile', awareness and visibility of independent video production through competitions, festivals and conferences were only mildly successful.

Ironically, those earlier promotional attempts were often spoiled by the same media and industry that is now so heavily behind the current 'home-tech/high squeal'. It appears that producers were expected to passively wait until the authorized dealerships of commerce decided exactly when and how to strip-mine the resources. That time has come: Betamax and VCR's were the technology, rock video was the excuse.

(A quiet reminder: we do not make *videos*; we make *tapes*; we watch tapes. *Videos* is a production-illiterate term, favoured by journalists.)

C.R.

V/TAPE SERVICE

CONSTRUCTING THE COMPREHENSIVE MODEL

V/tape is a non-profit service organisation which will soon offer a comprehensive computerized listing of independently produced videotapes. Formed in 1980 by five video artists (Susan Britton, Colin Campbell, Clive Robertson, Lisa Steele and Rodney Werden), it operated as an informal distribution co-op and support group to assist in artists' self-distribution.

CLIVE ROBERTSON

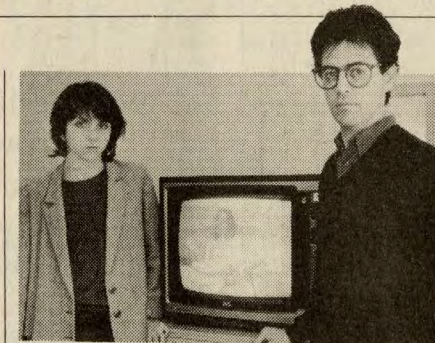
V/TAPE MEMBERS OFTEN discussed questions of video distribution and its economics: promotion of video as a particular medium; the development of specific (as well as general) audiences for video and most importantly, the need for a comprehensive, easy to use, listing of videotapes which would include the whole range of materials being produced. At this point, the potential was perceived for a database listing of videotapes available for distribution.

In the summer of 1982 the computerized listing project was actively undertaken by Toronto-based video artists, Lisa Steele and Kim Tomczak. After several months of research into distribution models, educational and community markets for video tape, the feasibility of a computerized system, as well as specific research into similar database systems, V/tape is now ready to begin listing tapes on the computer, using specially designed software which was developed by Les Titze.

The following interview took place early in September 1983.

CLIVE ROBERTSON: Do you see V/Tape as an improvement on the other models available for distributing videotapes?

KIM TOMCZAK: It's different in NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983



Lisa Steele & Kim Tomczak of V/Tape

that V/Tape is not actually a distributor of video at all. It's an information service which will list tapes on a computer — including where they are available — and then make that information available on request.

C.R.: What kinds of tapes are you going to list?

LISA STEELE: We want and need a comprehensive listing: V/tape won't be tied to any particular style or genre of work. The criterion we're looking at now is that the work be originally produced on video. We'll be including artists' tapes, documentaries, community-produced tapes, as well as recordings of events, lectures, panels, conferences, etc. We know that some of these tapes won't be as actively distributed (after listing) as others; we just think it's important that they are there because there's valuable research material available on them. As information becomes available, I think

they will be used as resource material by people doing research.

K.T.: We also intend to list videotapes which are in archives across the country, tapes which aren't available for distribution but can be viewed in-house at the facility where they are stored. For instance, *Trinity Square Video* (Toronto) has tapes in its archive which were recorded in the early '70's; *Video Inn* (Vancouver) has hundreds of tapes; so do *PRIM* and *Videographe* (Montreal). It's historical material and it's important that it's known about.

C.R.: You won't be making any judgements about what tapes are listed?

L.S.: We won't be; if we have any questions about a tape being listed or not being listed, we would take it to our advisory board. We want V/tape to be representative of more views than our own, so we've set up an advisory board to discuss and suggest policy and direction for the service as a whole. Undoubtedly, questions about tapes being listed will come up, and there will be questions about future directions. We feel that representatives from the video production community can arrive at workable solutions. Our first board of advisors is Colin Campbell, Danielle Depeyre and Rodney Werden.

C.R.: What has made the computer so necessary for your service?

K.T.: Each listing will have numerous access points. The computer can search for one or more of these access points on request. For example, if someone teaching a women's studies course wants information on video for possible use in their class, we could tell them how many titles are listed which are produced by women or women's groups, and of these how many are narrative tapes and/or categorized within women's issues. It gets pretty specific by that time. For someone interested in programming an evening of recent video art productions, we could search that request quite easily. And of course, if someone has the title of the tape they want and they just need to know where to get a copy to show, if the tape is listed with V/tape it's simple to pull out the distribution information and pass it on. The computer's necessary because it will operate like a large, automated card file system: it will accommodate users of video material who already have extensive knowledge of the field —

INFORMATION ACCESS FOR ALL TYPES OF VIDEO

such as curators and regular programmers. It will also encourage those who have never used video material to do so because it can process very general inquiries.

L.S.: When we were doing our research into other models for information services like *V/tape*, we visited two organizations in New York — the

Educational Film Library Association, programmers of the *American Film Festival* as well as a primary source of distribution information about independent film in the U.S., and *Media Network*, a clearing house for distribution information on social issue media. The people who ran both of these organizations urged us to use the com-

puter from the beginning if at all possible. *E.F.L.A.* said that they have so much information on cards at the present time that in order to convert to a database, they would have to close down for a year.

C.R.: How will you get all of this information about the videotapes onto the system?

K.T.: In the beginning, we feel that it's necessary to do a series of workshops across the country in order to collect and organize the tape information. We'll go to regional video centres and introduce *V/tape* to the community. Then we'll meet with artists and producers who want their tapes listed. We'll view an example of their work and complete the reporting form for that tape with them. That way they can describe and categorize their work in a way which is acceptable to them. Then if they have other tapes which they want listed, they can fill out these reporting forms on their own. After the first several hundred entries have been made on the computer, it will probably be possible for producers who are new to the *V/tape* system to fill out their reporting form aided by examples of other entries.

C.R.: How will *V/tape* work economically? I understand that the service will be free for video producers. Will there be any charge for using the service?

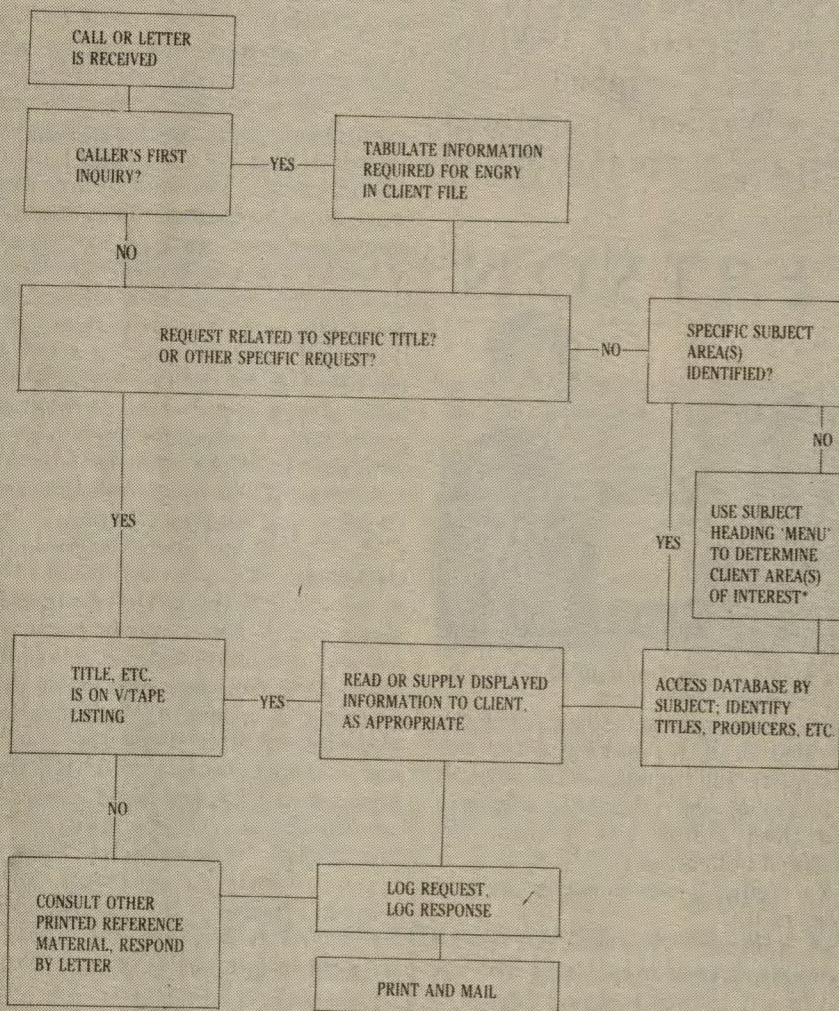
L.S.: We're in the process of setting a scale for payment based on the amount of information which *V/tape* provides to a client. And there will probably be a slightly different rate for an institution (or someone inquiring on behalf of an institution) than for an individual doing research, for example.

C.R.: So *V/tape's* services will be accessible to individuals doing research or someone who is a member of a very informal group and might be interested in screening some video for that group?

L.S.: Yes. In fact, I would say that we are going to be actively encouraging that use of video — within small specialized audiences. I think it's important because many tapes — even those whose intention is not to exist as discussion material — can be used to initiate discussion. They can still be used within exhibition settings, but we will be seeking other audiences for the whole range of material being produced on video.

C.R.: Will there be any 'on-line'

HOW V/TAPE WILL ACCESS INFORMATION



PLEASE NOTE: This flow chart is a very simplified version of *V/tape's* projected service. It is a very basic indication of how information will travel through the system. It should be kept in mind, however, that the programme which is being planned for *V/tape* will be capable of many different forms of cross-referencing.

* Subject headings are just one part of the *V/tape* system which will be capable of being cross-referenced. Others include: producer's name, sponsoring or production facility used, length, production location, type and sub-type (i.e. art tape, narrative, recorded proceedings, panel discussions), appropriate audience range (i.e. high school, adult, etc.), awards (which the tape has received, if applicable).

John Greyson

MAGAZINE RACKETS

A SOUPÇON OF CANADIAN CONTENT

A sustaining feature of Canada's cultural industries has always been their struggle for survival. Survival, for our cultural industries, inevitably means to avoid drowning in the soup of Americana that seems to slop over everything. In the distribution of Canadian magazines, the ambience is decidedly soupy.

MARTIN CASH

IT HAS NEVER BEEN A SECRET

that American magazines dominate the newsstands of our country. In fact a magazine stand full of those glossy American titles is a universally familiar sight anywhere in the country. A few random statistics on the situation leave little doubt as to the extent of American presence. In 1975, it was estimated that Canadian titles occupied a measly 3% of the space on the newsstands. That figure has since skyrocketed to about 10%.

Of the periodicals imported into the country 93% are American and more

than 40 of these have Canadian distribution of more than 40,000. Very few of the 400-odd magazines published in Canada have *world wide circulation* of more than 40,000. And one would be hard pressed to find more than a handful of Canadian titles on the 15,000 newsstands across the country.

Thirteen of the fourteen national magazine distributors operating in Canada are American owned. The 'odd one out' is *Coast-to-Coast Distributors*, which is owned by *Maclean Hunter*, with a stable of con-

library access to the *V/tape* system?

K.T.: 'On-line' is sort of a misleading term. At the present time, you can design something which you think will be compatible when, at some future date, a system like Telidon, for example, may be more widely available. At the present time, very few of these networks are open for general use. And even if it were there to be used, I don't think it would be appropriate for *V/tape's* information at this point. Right now there's so little use of independently produced video material in educational institutions or community-based groups, that just dumping information about it at random would be almost useless. In order for *V/tape* to make any significant inroads into these potential markets, we're going to have to do general introductions about the medium and follow it up with specific information which is relevant to that particular situation. It's going to take a lot of research and personal contacts. C.R.: Once you've begun to make these contacts — and even before I would guess — *V/tape* will be receiving requests for information. How will that work?

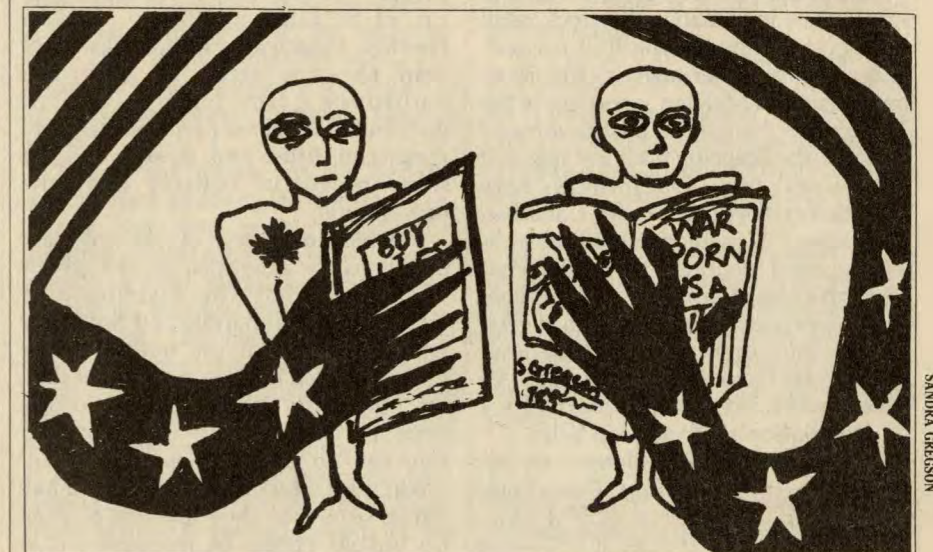
L.S.: As we said earlier, the more specific the request, the easier the retrieval. It's either listed or it's not. It's in the more general requests for information that it gets tricky. *V/tape* is not a distributor; we won't be 'handling' a certain number of tapes; we'll be compiling an on-going and expanding listing of videotapes which are available for distribution. We don't want to make any decisions for potential programmers and audiences. We don't want *V/tape* — or ourselves, in our work in *V/tape* — to act as curators.

K.T.: I think it's possible to project a time in the future when there will be many more outlets for showing videotapes. At that point, people will, for the most part, simply need information about how to get tapes. They will be quite capable of choosing their own programme, as is done with film or with reading material or whatever.

For those interested in further information or participation in this project, contact:

V/TAPE

Box 171, 55 McCaul St.,
Toronto Canada M5T 2W7
(416) 595-9750



SANDRA GREYSON

sumer magazines controlling about 35% of the net national advertising revenue.

The most glaring indictment of the unwillingness of foreign owned distributors to promote, or adequately deal with, Canadian publications is to be found in the fact that *Maclean Hunter* only began distributing their own product after years of frustration in dealing with the American owned distributors.

The Wholesalers

National distributors receive publications from the publisher and distribute them to wholesalers. In this way the fourteen national distributors control to a large extent the magazines that wholesalers can make available to the stores. While it is possible for a publisher to deal directly with wholesalers, it is unlikely that accounts with small independent magazines are viewed by these wholesalers with the same 'commitment' as the large accounts that they have with national distributors.

American control of the newsstands of the country has not escaped the sharp eyes of our legislators. In 1971, the Ontario government passed a bill which they hoped would help break the American stranglehold, by prohibiting control of more than 25% of the stocks of regional wholesalers in Ontario, by non-residents. Yet this legislation has had no substantial impact on Canadian periodicals' access to the newsstands in Ontario.

All but one of the 37 licenced regional wholesalers in Canada who stock retail outlets are now Canadian-owned, although their heritage is American ownership. Ed McKinn, president of the 37-member *Periodical Distributors of Canada* (the licencing body for regional distributors) says, "Our members have provided excellent service for Canadian magazines." Canadian periodical publishers must shudder to think what McKinn's idea of poor service would be. Their dependence on American owned distributors combined with their low-risk 'profit from proven product' attitude, works to reinforce their legacy of distribution of American titles.

The other Canadian element in this picture is the *Canadian Periodicals Publishers Association* (C.P.P.A.). The C.P.P.A. was formed in 1973 as a

non-profit organization to help in the promotion of independent Canadian general interest and consumer magazines. In 1976 a distribution aspect was added to its operations as a service to its members. It operates as a national distributor (with modest arrangements with two regional wholesalers outside of Ontario) as well as a wholesaler (delivering directly to retail outlets). Their wholesale accounts, however, add up to a mere 265 of the 15,000 retail stores in Canada which sell magazines.

For about one-quarter of the magazines published in Canada C.P.P.A. is the only national distributor. Most of their titles are special interest publications or 'general interest' with a very limited market. For instance, C.P.P.A.'s total draw per issue of *This Magazine* (arguably one of the most incisive and well-written news and analysis magazines in the country) is 1,100. It is one of C.P.P.A.'s best sellers; yet, according to *This Magazine's* circulation/distribution manager Frances Rooney, it can be found on only 31 magazine racks in Toronto. On the other hand, *Metro Toronto News Co.* (a regional wholesaler for the Toronto area only) distributes 130,000 copies of each issue of *Penthouse* magazine and *Penthouse* can be found in almost every one of the 4,000 stores that sell magazines in Toronto.

The present state of magazine distribution has a long history. *Metro Toronto News*, for instance, operates in much the same way now as it did before it was sold by the *Pierce News Co.* of St. Louis in 1972 to *Maclean Hunter*. (*Maclean Hunter* has since sold the operation to a former employee, Jim Neill.) It still distributes the same preponderance of American titles and it still has the same powerful control over the newsstands.

Furthermore, one of the inherent problems of attempts to change or challenge what the distributors/wholesalers will handle and how they will do it, is that the nature of the business lends itself to monopoly control. Since an average of 45% of the product that gets to the stands is returned to the wholesaler for full credit, the wholesaler wants to make damn sure that they are not picking up unsold copies of magazines that

were dropped off to the retailer by someone else.

Tom Worsley, sales co-ordinator for *Metro Toronto News Co.*, says that they take on distribution of every title they think might sell, just so that no one else would be encouraged to start up a rival operation and introduce a product that *Metro News* might get their hands on as returns. For smaller distributors this is a problem. For example, *Saturday Night* and *Toronto Life* are both members of C.P.P.A., but regional wholesalers distribute these titles. As a result, C.P.P.A.'s other titles are often effectively excluded from the outlets that the wholesaler deals with. Except for the large specialty magazines and book stores, C.P.P.A. must find retailers who do not deal with the local wholesaler.

Ron Sellwood, C.P.P.A.'s distribution manager, says, "There really aren't many good accounts out there." And in all likelihood any new accounts will have to approach C.P.P.A. rather than vice versa because they have a staff of four handling the national distribution for more than 90 magazines, while *Metro News* has a staff of about 400 with 100 trucks at their disposal for distribution in the Toronto area only.

It's extremely difficult for anyone wishing to sell magazines in Toronto not to deal with *Metro*. They even have a small factory, beside their sprawling plant in the shadow of the Metro East Detention Centre in Scarborough, that builds the wooden stands which display the millions of magazines that they distribute every year.

Who Gets the Money

The traditional revenue split is 50% to the publisher, 10% to the national distributor, and 20% to the wholesaler and retailer. But years ago the large publishing houses in New York began to offer a retail display allowance (RDA) of 10% to retailers who displayed the full face of their magazine rather than have it tucked in behind the competition. But the competition started offering the same deal. Now, with most major titles, a retailer can apply to the publisher for an extra 10% off the cover price, but there is no longer any obligation to give full face display. The C.P.P.A., as well, in an effort to encourage more retailers to try

their magazines, offers 30% to the retailer on all their titles. The remaining revenues are split 25% to C.P.P.A. and 45% to the publisher.

Ed McKinn, president of the 37 member *Periodical Distributors of Canada*, says the administration of the RDA is so cumbersome that there must be a fairly large volume of sales to make it worthwhile for the retailer. But it is apparently worthwhile to the chain stores which, Worsley says, now refuse to sell titles that don't carry an RDA.

Who Gets to Choose

The proliferation of retail chain stores has done much to standardize the kinds of magazine titles most available. Loblaws and Dominion (major grocery chains), United Cigar Stores, Garfield's and other chain stores in the Toronto area contract with *Metro* to handle only certain titles. But not all retailers have this clout.

Sun Nan is a Korean immigrant who owns Queen's Milk Variety, a bustling convenience store in downtown Toronto. He has never heard of RDA and he is very unhappy about the way *Metro News* deals with him. Nan claims that *Metro* continuously dumps magazines on him that he doesn't want and they refuse to let him order for himself. Nan makes 20% of the cover price off every magazine that he sells and he complains that *Metro* doesn't always give him full credit on his returns.

Worsley, believing perhaps in the old free enterprise adage 'the supplier is always right', says, "Many of our customers are Korean and Pakistani and they really don't know much about magazines. Our computer monitors the sales of every title at every store, so we know better than the store owners what's selling and what isn't."

Metro News has 800 clients who are members of the Korean Businessmen's Association in Toronto. Spokeswoman for the association, Sunny Suh, says her members are constantly complaining about *Metro News*. But, she says, "There's no one else they can get magazines from, so we don't know what to do about it."

She was surprised to learn that there was another licensed wholesaler in Toronto, *Highpoint Periodicals*, carry-

ing significantly the same titles as *Metro News*. *Highpoint* was formed seven years ago, primarily to serve Mac's Milk stores (which account for the vast majority of their accounts). Bob Desormbaux, of Mac's Convenience Stores, refused to comment on why they wouldn't deal with *Metro News*. But while *Highpoint's* 170 accounts don't look like much when compared to *Metro News's* 4,000, they don't seem to be gearing up towards any aggressive competition over Toronto's magazine dollars. *Highpoint's* General Manager, Terry Doherty says they have an agreement with *Metro News* not to tamper with each other's accounts.

Yet for publishers, readers and retailers alike, the choices are truly minimal within the current distribution system. And the choice between two local distributors who are offering essentially the same magazines and whose priority is profit rather than culture will inevitably serve to maintain the status quo. The argument used against the introduction of quotas for Canadian publications is usually the free-enterprise free market 'you can't tell people what to sell' argument. This remains within the context of decisions by wholesaler/distributor executives that this magazine will sell and that one won't. These are of course self-fulfilling prophecies. If a magazine is not on a newsstand it will not sell well.

Because of the problems of this system of getting magazines onto newsstands, publishers and readers of independent and alternative publications in Canada are dependent on subscriptions. About 70% of sales of Canadian magazines are by subscription, 30% from newsstand sales. The figures are almost exactly the opposite of those for foreign magazine sales in Canada.

The latest move by the federal government affecting the periodical industry was their announcement this summer of their intention to remove the absurd postal subsidies on foreign magazines that are printed and mailed in Canada. The standard commercial rate for second class mail under 200 grams is 33.7¢. Canadian magazines pay only 4.2¢ a copy. *Time* magazine and 28 other foreign magazines that are printed and mailed in Canada are now paying 5.3¢ a copy and the 319 publications which are printed outside of the country but mailed in Canada are cur-

rently paying 32.2¢ a copy.

The preferential mailing rates are a point of survival for most small publications. Yet increasing subscribers, without exposure on newsstands, is a constant problem. Promotional materials sent through the mails to prospective subscribers must be posted at unsubsidized rates that are usually prohibitively expensive for small independent publishers. As a result the larger subscriber areas remain the areas where the magazines are relatively well distributed and available on the newsstands. People don't generally subscribe to a magazine until after they have been exposed to a number of issues.

Sheryl Cheda, Executive Director of the C.P.P.A., echoes the voice of the membership when she says that access to the newsstands is the greatest problem facing Canadian magazines. But in the August 1981 issue of *Quill & Quire* she shied away from the idea of quotas, suggesting instead, "exploring tax incentives for distribution of Canadian magazines on our newsstands." While the idea of essentially 'paying people not to starve out indigenous culture' may not appeal to everyone, there are probably very few publishers that would boycott the idea if it were to come into effect.

But there are many models for improving the state of distribution of indigenous culture. In France, although there is not nearly the same problem of 'spill-over' of foreign publications, regional wholesalers are obliged to distribute local publications by a quota system. Similar schemes could be implemented here.

As long as Canadian magazines have to compete with American ones under the present distribution system there will continue to be only a handful of recognizable Canadian magazines bobbing in the soup of Americana.

In an upcoming issue FUSE will look at some of the ways that specific publishers have dealt with and are dealing with the problems of access to newsstands as well as their fantasies about a distribution access system that could work.

Martin Cash is a journalism student at Ryerson and the circulation manager for FUSE magazine.

ELECTRONIC DEMOCRACY

HOW TO 'LIBERATE' THE AIRWAVES

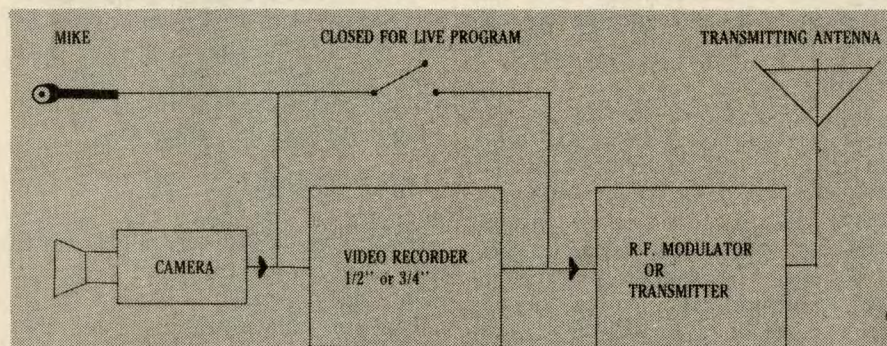
In an earlier issue of FUSE (Summer 1983) an article by Ken Blaine "The September Purge", clearly pointed out the catastrophic effects which occur when community media falls into the hands of financial adventurers. In this issue, Joseph DuBovy will look at the new possibilities for community television, which are currently being explored in the U.S.

JOSEPH DUBOVY

IN THE CASE OF VANCOUVER Cable Ten, citizen access to TV meant a sensitivity to local issues. Yet Roger's Cable standardized operations and increased cost efficiency by closing the neighborhood media centres despite concerns of the C.R.T.C. (the Canadian Radio and Television Commission). The dedication of community volunteers to their neighborhoods was used by the cable operator only as a means of turning a handsome profit.

The plight of *Vancouver Cable Ten* and the storefront studios at Kitsilano, Richmond and Burnaby are being

repeated at various cable systems throughout Canada and the U.S. with different variations. American cable operators appear to promote the communities' desire to produce in-depth and spontaneous programs. At first, they will provide cameras, modulators and technicians. However, after a very short time, they will judge community produced programs on their ability to promote cable subscribers. Soon the cable operator reneges on his offer to provide equipment to the community and acquires a cheap satellite to produce a quick profit.



Components required for complete 1 to 10 watt Low Power TV station. To produce only LIVE programs, video recorder may be eliminated.

In response to the need for community media, progressives in the U.S. are taking a different approach to video broadcast. It started some 13 years ago in Woodstock, N.Y. A Woodstock pirate TV station operated out of an old farmhouse. This station's effect on mainstream television producers resulted in the network special, "Saturday Night Live". But, this same TV station was to eventually inspire an entirely new class of TV operations in the USA.

In the late seventies, a coalition of ethnic groups along with Nader's *Coalition for Better Broadcasting* in Washington, pushed for F.C.C. hearings to explore the possibility of a Low Power TV Service (LPTV). The F.C.C., at the prompting of the conservative National Association of Broadcasters, responded that too much interference would be caused by this new class of service. It was the testimony of the Woodstock pirate TV operator that put an end to the F.C.C.'s 'interference' cop-out. Larry Teasdale testified that the Woodstock station took special pains to protect viewers from interference. They mailed a questionnaire asking the viewers to report on interference and offering to remedy it at once. Such testimony indicating the public responsibility of an unlicensed TV operator so impressed the F.C.C. that they were quick to dismiss their previous concern about interference. Such testimony showed that big corporations did not have a monopoly on public responsibility. Further, the F.C.C. was upset by Teasdale's testimony that the Woodstock TV operation cost \$3,000 in 1972 but would only cost about 20% of that (\$600) by 1982. The F.C.C. foresaw another embarrassing fiasco coming up in the eighties if they refused to create the LPTV service. After all, it would be better to license a \$600 TV station than to have 500,000 'pirate' TV stations.

The F.C.C. had not forgotten two recent affairs which left them with egg on their austere faces. In the early days of CB radio, the F.C.C. issued an order that any purchaser of a CB transmitter had to register the transmitter and pay \$5 for a license. When millions of imported CB sets caused CB prices to plunge, the F.C.C. could no longer enforce their \$5 license rule. Highly embarrassed, they recanted, allowing 'CBers' to go unlicensed.

An earlier episode involved thousands of enterprising businessmen in the west who had set up illegal TV

LPTV MANUFACTURERS OF SMALL TRANSMITTERS SELL THEM FOR LESS THAN \$300. ANTENNAS CAN BE HOMEMADE . . .

translators, extending the reception of already licensed stations. Everybody profited — the licensed station, because their advertisers got extended coverage, the public got TV where it never existed, and the translator entrepreneur because he sold more advertising. The translator owner did so well that he joined others like himself, forming a power lobby in Washington. This lobby was so effective in pressuring Congress and the Senate that a year after the F.C.C. had said that it would never license these illegal stations, it started to license them. Today, some 3200 TV translator stations are legal.

Licensing the Revolution

To avoid further embarrassment the F.C.C. created a special department to serve their current needs regarding Low Power TV service. However, the Reagan administration, seeing the terrible potential for social revolution here, took steps to subvert this liberal F.C.C. act. Borrowing a page out of Off Track Betting, a lottery has been established so that the F.C.C. will not have to process the 1,000 LPTV applications that it receives each month.

Meanwhile, in some communities, with 30% and higher unemployment rates, LPTV is now being used to provide technical retraining. These 'pirate' station operators could not wait for a Government commissioner in the F.C.C. to pull their name out of a hat, while families in their community were without food and rent money. Local health agencies could not wait for the results of a lottery in order to show health films that would prevent an epidemic. Neighborhoods with crime and addiction crises could not wait for a lottery before they produced programs that attempt to redirect energies away from drugs and crime — and programs that point a finger at the real oppressor, so that hostility need not be directed against fellow victims, or against the self.¹

Community LPTV stations have encouraged self-reliance in communities

¹In the sixties, long before TV, pirate radio was used by the *Black Panthers* to create drug-free communities. Panther leader, Cleaver was so impressed with pirate radio that he (unsuccessfully) sought to raise money for a powerful pirate radio station to be stationed on a ship in international waters.

as volunteers train each other in the use of video equipment and community volunteers feel proud that their dedication is not being ripped off for the profit of a slick and cynical cable operator. Once a community decides it wants to go ahead with a LPTV project, it must first overcome the 'We can't do it, because we're not professionals' syndrome. In the early days of a community media project, hidden talent will come out of the woodwork that will surprise everybody. Recognizing and supporting the worth of these projects, the *International Association of Machinists* (located in Washington, D.C.) has, through lobbying Congress, had legislation introduced that would provide federal funding for all community centres in order to facilitate their becoming media centres.

Talking Technology

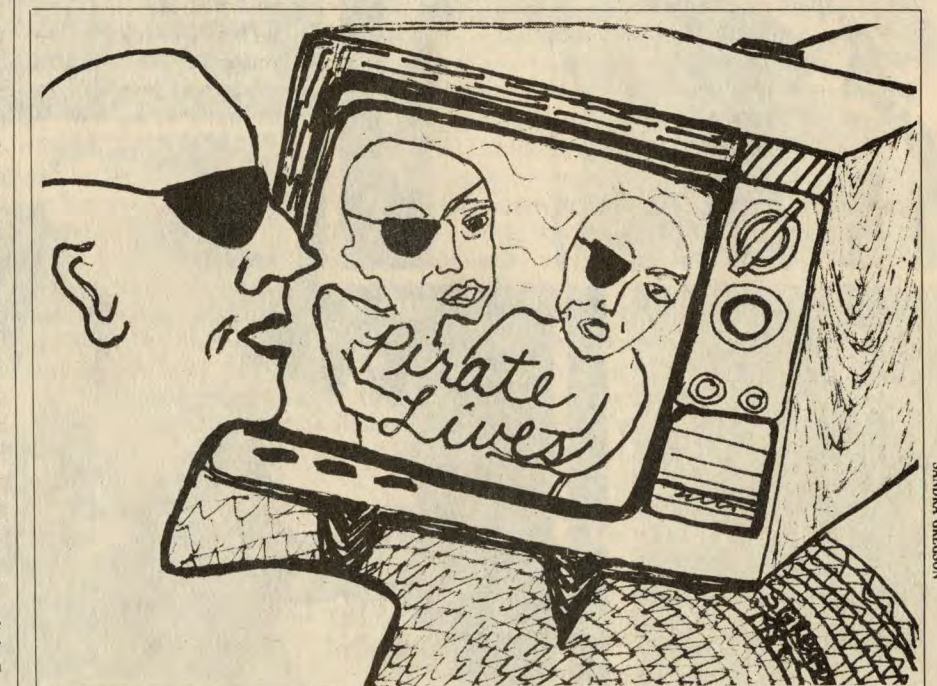
But, what about the sophisticated equipment?

In 1956 Ampex introduced the first video recorder. It was called a 2" quad, because it used 2" video tape. Over succeeding years video recorders were reduced to 1", then 3/4", 1/2" and now there are 1/4" video recorders which are no larger than a film camera. At the same time, prices have been slashed as

the volume of Japanese imports have increased. By Christmas, I expect to see a colour VCR selling for \$250 in the U.S. If a low cost TV station wants to play tapes in colour which have been made elsewhere and do live programming in black & white, then a \$140 B&W security camera can be used. (Fig. 1 shows a simple, low cost TV station for both live and recorded programs.) The transmitter, or RF modulator, generates the signal that sends the video and audio over the air. These can be obtained from companies who sell such devices to cable companies for \$500. LPTV manufacturers of small transmitters sell them for less than \$300. Antennas can be homemade or single channel TV receiving antennas with high quality coaxial transmission line.

In urban areas with a high population density, available VHF channels could cause interference on an adjacent channel. However, even in these areas, many UHF channels are waiting to be used by communities desperately in need of electronic free speech.

Joseph DuBovy has been a designer of radio and TV transmitters for 25 years, is now chief engineer with a video production company in N.Y.C. Publications include, *Introduction to Amateur Radio* (Prentice Hall).



POP!



FIVE YEARS OF CHANGE: Above, at the Peace Concert in 1978, Bob Marley links the hands of progressive then-Prime Minister Manley and U.S. favorite (current right-wing P.M.) Seaga. In 1980, *Native* played strongly during *Sunsplash* (left). Below, a tired reggae-lover can't get near the stage at *Sunplash '83*.



GOES THE CULTURE

No Worries, No Upsets to the Fun . . . No Thanks!

ISOBEL HARRY

Isobel Harry recently received a *Reggae Music Media Award* (print media) from Black artists and musicians for her longstanding support and advocacy. Here she writes, with pained dissatisfaction, of the upwardly mobile turn of events from the *Peace Conference* (1978) to the present *Sunplash*, from Bob Marley to Eddy Grant. Why would Eddy Grant dance on Marley's grave, deny Rasta music, deny dope, deny the Revolution? The answer goes Pop!

LITTLE DID I KNOW WHEN THE plane touched down at MoBay airport in June that I was going to be experiencing my last fling with pop culture before taking a very long sabbatical from circulating scoops on the stars. In fact, when a friend met me outside the terminal and I hopped into his jeep, and he popped a tape into his deck, little did I know that that very tape was going to be instrumental in my making the final decision to put a cork in the unending champagne flow of bubbly entertainment being poured on the ever-thirsty (and ever-drunk) public.

The tape was *Killer on the Rampage*, Eddy Grant's new album (written, arranged, and produced by Eddy Grant, at Blue Wave Studios, St. Philip, Barbados), whose single, "Electric Avenue" was No. 1 in England. It was causing a stir in Jamaica, because Grant has dreadlocks and Rastas always think dreadlocks are a sign of comradeship with the ideals of Rasta culture, until proven otherwise.

"Electric Avenue" sounded dynamic as we sped through mountainous countryside with roads lined by cane fields and bamboo trees. We joked about writing a Jamaican version, called "Ital Avenue" (ital means natural in Rasta), to counter the urbanity of Grant's song with the specifics of the locale we were travelling through. We found out later that Electric Avenue is the name of the main street in London's black ghetto of Brixton. The disco sounds of the tape, the energy, the mixing of reggae with funk and other new dance rhythms seemed modern and danceable, but still

rooted in the coziness of Caribbean culture.

Listening to "Too Young to Fall", I thought I suppose anyone can make one mistake on an album. Grant sounds like a macho muscle head when telling a young girl that she's too young to be in love with him now, but maybe later when they can get together. But I wasn't willing to write him off yet.

"Latin Love Affair" is loose, uninhibited music, with vocals that waver up and down like old Calypso records, the whole effect nicely corny with rolling rhythms. We thought we even detected hints of *spouge*, the sound that is native to Barbados, where Grant now lives.

"Drop Baby Drop" (...all your love on me) is clever: almost sexist, but ambiguous. The song "Killer on the Rampage" is melodic, and we sang along with the chorus, "Killer on the rampage/Don't feel no fear/can't kill my love for you", trying to decipher its meaning. "War Party" is powerfully written, possibly Grant's best 'social comment' song. He's relaxed enough to use some patois, and his suggestion of being duped by war pirates is reminiscent of Bob Marley, especially when he sings: "Everybody seems to be inviting me to a war party/Me nah wanna go/Heard about the last one/So thanks but no thank yo-ho, yo-ho."

"It's All in You" is a dancing love song with noble sentiments and is good, apart from the constant repetition of the word "baby" to signify the woman in whom it all is. The whole album is catchy upon first hearing it. In fact, it remained catchy throughout my stay.

We were becoming convinced that Grant might be the one to take reggae (rock 'n' roll with meaning) to the commercial heights it had never attained. On the strength of one album that is not bad.

Why? Looking for new heroes, I guess. That's the only way I can explain this fever to put people in Marley's place. Whether they want to be there or not.

That's before I started reading Grant's press, before he and I talked, before I attended *Sunplash*, and certainly before I had decided to give all pop a pass, at least for a while, and at least under my own name.

Hearing History Being Made

Sunplash, the festival whose time has come . . . and gone, I think. It used to be that *Sunplash* was so roots you could actually hear history being made. The concerts have always been events... occasions, with not just a little glamour attached, but where ingenuity and originality were the performers' signatures. And the concerts seemed more rooted in reality, attached to the locale in which they were produced. They were political and public broadsheets, barometers for the mood of the people, as translated by the performers. *The Peace Concert* (1978) worked as an expression of the willingness of the performers to really put their songs to work for the messages of peace they were trying to convey.

The white press ("the foreign journalists") have always been treated with deference and magnanimity . . . nothing was put in their way, no obstacles to the complete enjoyment of a restricted view of Jamaica. The best views of the stage were provided, unhindered vision for the photographers, shuttle buses to hotels, rum punch, the whole tropical welcome. But when you got beyond that, there *was* something there . . . not just more false fronts. Now, *Sunplash* stars are glittering more and inventing less. Now it is strictly entertainment, no worries, no upsets to the fun.



Isobel Harry

Black Uhura
(Michael Rose, Ducky Simpson
& Puma Jones)
played at Sunsplash '80

Sunsplash is held at the Bob Marley Memorial Centre now, in Montego Bay. It is a long, narrow enclosure made of cement bricks, the ones made from "rock stone" painstakingly broken with a pick into fist-sized stones in one of the most thankless manual jobs on the island. These broken stones also lie all over the ground of the Centre, making walking hazardous. The entrances are narrow, like going into a cow pen, and the police are in force, making entering an unpleasant process.

You have to choose the \$20 ticket, or the \$35 ticket. There is one level of viewing only — all on the ground — so the choice is only close (with seats), or far away (standing room). None of us feeling particularly wealthy, we chose to stand at the back.

It looked as though there were 15,000 people in the grounds. More than 2/3's were in the standing section, and the rest, some Jamaicans and a lot of young foreigners, sat up front, divided from the back by about 50 yards of fenced-in space line with police.

This was Friday night, the second-last night of Sunsplash, and it was buzzing. On each side of the enclosure were booths selling every conceivable Rasta artifact: red, green and gold tams, buttons (Reggae not Reagan), socks, t-shirts (Reggae Spliff-Splash), belts, key-chains, records, tapes, bedsheets, headbands, sweatshirts, stationery, and decals (Weed of Wisdom, Coptic Time) for your car. There were Ital food booths, dispensing rice and peas and stew veg for \$20 per vegetarian plate. Cookies were 3 for \$4.

The place was jammed. The concert

was to have started at eight, and we got there at eleven, with the second band on the programme just going on stage. People jostled in the standing room area, many people had picked a spot and then just camped there, putting down cushions, blankets, or sometimes just lying on the rocky ground. We had to pick our way carefully over the disarray of sleeping bags and supine bodies. We could see absolutely nothing but a far away stage and tiny figures on it. In the middle of this section was a large video screen, with no sound, that showed what was happening on stage. I saw *Dallol*, the Ethiopian band that had a No. 1 hit on the charts back home as they danced in djellabas on stage. But they were too far away to really empathize with, never mind see.

Of course, the urge to get closer overtook me and a friend, and we slowly made our way through the crowds, inching closer and closer to the barricade that separated the two areas. In Jamaica, things are never what they seem, and there was an actual little laneway created behind the cops' backs where people were just filing into the sitting-room area from the standing-room area. We crawled in, and over several barricades, and walked right up to the front (with me being white, they probably thought I belonged in there) and sat down as Nadine Sutherland, teen queen of the m-o-r scene, held court for what seemed a very long set, then the *Melody Makers* (Rita and Bob Marley's children) skipped on stage in their disco regalia. Imagine John Travolta imitating Bob Marley and you have Ziggy Marley (only the resem-

blance to Bob is staggering) in pink shirt and leather outfit calling out Jah! Rastafari!, just like Dad, only he does it after songs that sound like "Saturday Night Fever". Jamaicans love home-grown shobizz, and they are always willing to give talent a chance, and they love Ziggy, so *Melody Makers* could do no wrong.

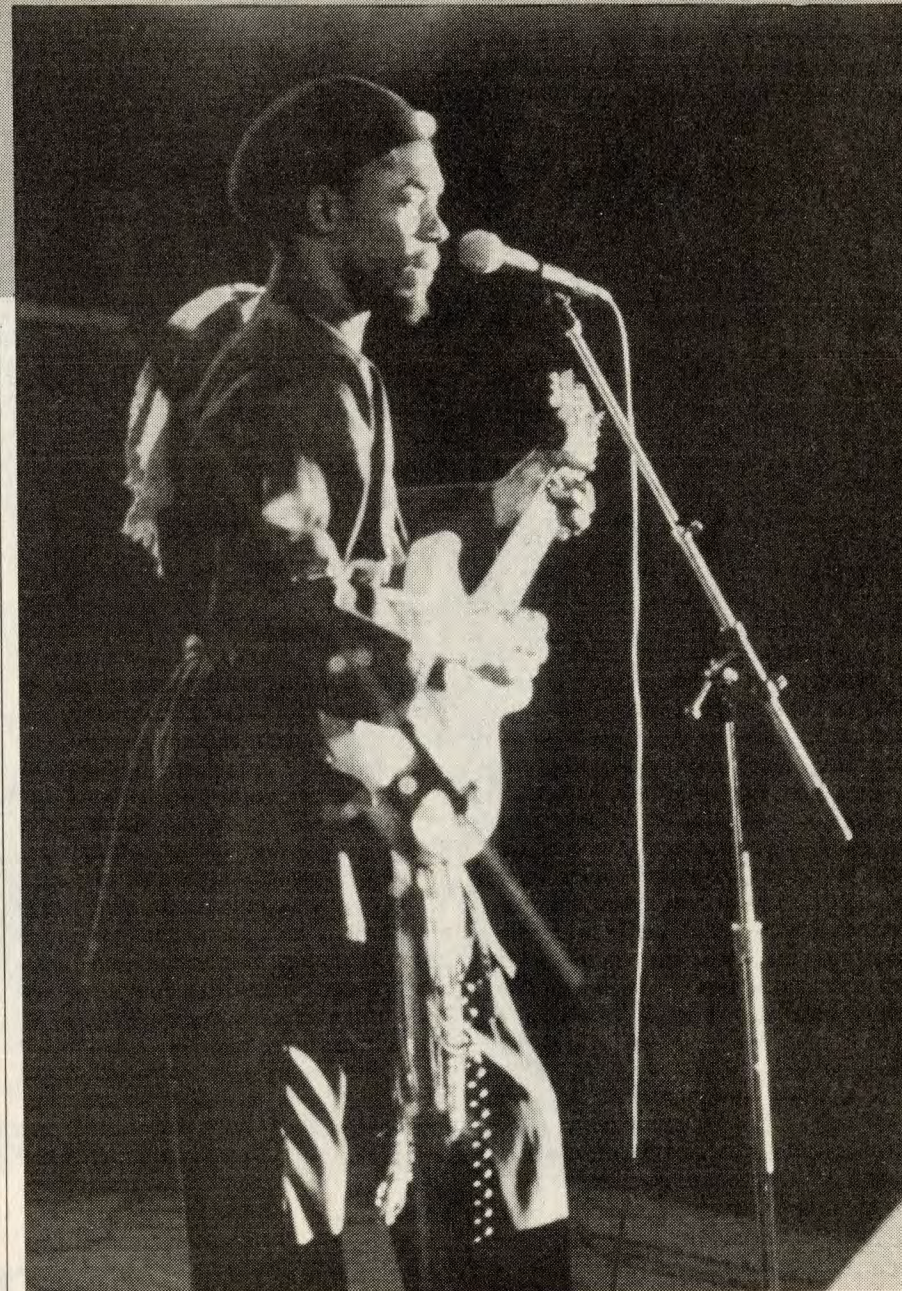
Rasta Meets Las Vegas

Rita Marley came on and did a medley of her hits, closing each song by shouting "I love ya!" over the din. Sort of a combination of Rasta and Las Vegas. Then on came *Sister Breeze*, but by that time, I was back in the standing room area again, and we were talking with one of the organizers of *Sunsplash*, *Synergy's* Tony Johnson, who told us that despite all the problems, *Sunsplash* was loved by the foreigners, and that is what counted, as Jamaicans would always put down their own events, anyway.

Mutabaruka, the dub poet, came on, and I watched him from the video screen, noticing he was swinging a slave chain manacled to both his wrists. Up close again, I saw he wore only a pair of trendy-looking dove-grey vinyl or leather pants and the manacles. Sort of slavery meets Soho. I sat down and watched as Muta did "Drug Culture", a very effective song about cocaine rotting the brain of Rastas, and then he launched into "Ya can't stay long in a white man's country!" his voice a deep profundo of massed threats. The whites loved it. I was confused. Did I come to hear this tirade of apartness? I couldn't make out his intent.

It was 6 a.m. Just as *Steel Pulse* came on, the sun came up, very slowly. Everyone in the front rows was either sound asleep or nodding off very seriously, and David Hinds, the leader of *Steel Pulse*, was having a terrific time trying to get people excited about the band's appearance. Their set, having been the most awaited, seemed to fall on deaf ears, and after twenty minutes the band went off.

Peter Tosh
on stage at
the Peace Concert
in Kingston, 1978



Isobel Harry

The sun was heating the place up and stragglers mingled about in a kind of morning-after daze, but the show is not over yet: still to come are a band I've always wanted to hear, *Chalice*, and then Dennis Brown. But by this time, I'm sitting outside a food booth at the back while a dread is boiling water on a wood fire for instant coffee. Around me are my companions: a pregnant woman, a mother with a three-month old baby, a teenage girl. We all look like we've been up working all night. The sun beats down as people leave the grounds in droves. There are perhaps 3,500 people left from last night's audience. The ones who run the booths are setting up for the new day's concert-goers: cars come in the grounds and unload supplies, garbage is gathered. A young man runs over to us carrying a clothes hanger on which are a T-shirt and vest, spray painted with an illustration of Bunny Wailer, with Bunny's logo front and back. Just \$42, shouts the man. Bunny Wailer outfit, \$42!

In the distance we could vaguely hear *Chalice*, then later still as we waited for other straggling members of our group to arrive at the jeep, Dennis Brown came on very far away.

We finally left on the 2-hour drive home in the dusty mid-morning, and as the jeep rolled out of the congested parking lot, I took one last look behind me at the refuse, material and human, left by this endurance marathon of music. I resolved not to go back, not to this form of *Sunsplash*, not to any rock concerts of that magnitude.

Simple entertainment is not what I crave. I don't want to be sung at anymore. We know about slavery manacles and what they mean conceptually. Yet if the slavery of today is to materialism, it was also what was most evident on the *Sunsplash* stage. The kind of entertainment that had made *Sunsplash* was not Jamaican-style imitations of Hollywood-style Babylon shows.

I don't know why *Reggae Sunsplash* has chosen now to throw in the towel and go commercial. But, without its

'rootsiness' it will remain what it has become, a bland showcase of stars.

If it hadn't been for reggae in the '70's, one cringes to think what pop music would be today. Reggae has affected musical, literary, visual, and recording arts . . . This isn't nostalgia for simpler times, but a desire for more consciousness in concerts. Concerts are obviously a major mode of commercial expression of the music artists of the '80's. It is a powerful medium of communication that shouldn't be trivialized.

If reggae has been called people's music, it should be accessible to those very people it celebrates, and not just a celebration of the egos of the performers, as in mainstream music. That

way, it might remain unique, tied in with the needs of the community it serves, fulfilling a true function — a reflection of the words it mouths. It would be filled with the energy of the people who love it and use it in their everyday lives.

Well, bye for now popsters. Hope we don't meet too soon in one of those adult playpens they call stadiums, watching the sun set on the culture, tapping feet to the beat.

Isobel Harry is a writer, photographer and editor, living in Toronto, and the publicist for Truths & Rights reggae band.

Eddy Grant
in concert,
Toronto



POP!



EDDY GRANT REVIEW / ISOBEL HARRY

RIDING THE OVER-LAPPING WAVES

The 'music industry' consists of a formalised interaction between record production and distribution monopolies, radio stations and entertainment journalists. Aside from profits, huge numbers of people are employed whose primary goal is to sustain their own guaranteed employment. The 'Eddy Grant phenomenon' is neither unusual nor surprising — artists get caught both coming and going in the mass market turnover where the 'industry' is the only constant.

AT THE CONCERT HALL, EDDY WAS IN BLACK from head to toe, sided by three women in lamé frocks who shimmied and shook ALL night. He sang "I Don't Wanna Dance" while the crowd danced its feet off and swayed in the new African-inspired style of tribal freedom of movement so popular at the pop shows of today. Grant's band looked like some soul revue lifted from a Chicago bar. At the centre was Eddy, enjoying the sound

he had put together, but still not quite comprehending what to do with it.

The evening before, Eddy Grant had explained to me that his music was "just music". At a carefully orchestrated press party thrown by CBS, Eddy had taken on all comers from the media in friendly squash sparring at a fitness centre near the Inn on the Park. He shook countless hands and signed autographs and gave precisely-timed (exactly ten minutes each) interviews to selected press people who also snapped photos and videotaped his moves.

The party was a model of the music industry in Canada: almost no black people, just Eddy, and one or two more. The white people seemed totally delighted with themselves for their discovery of Eddy. Eddy, they all said, wears locks like a Rasta, but he isn't a Rasta! Eddy, just like them, actually puts down Rastas, and thinks Bob Marley is just another songwriter! How refreshing! After so many Rasta musicians spouting "unintelligible dogma" for so many years, these tired industry people are more than ready for "just music", which is what Eddy plays.

EDDY GRANT INTERVIEW / ISOBEL HARRY

SPEAKING OF INTERPRETATIONS

ISOBEL HARRY: In "Killer on the Rampage", who or what is the killer?

EDDY GRANT: It's just a saying... you're asking me to dissect my song. I don't like to do that. You see, you should sit down and make it up in your mind and then whatever you think it is that's valid, all right? I give you permission.

I.H.: Have you been getting lots of questions about your connection or non-connection with Rastafarianism?

E.G.: Thousands of millions. You see what's happened is that they glorified this whole thing to such a degree that it has become a media sport. Rastafarianism has become a media sport and I think that anything that so many people believe in should never become a media sport. It's a media game now, 'Oh, let's write about Rasta because people will buy papers

to read about it, and we can talk about guys smoking drugs and glorify the ghetto' . . . and this kind of thing. I don't think that's right because to the people who are in those situations, it's a matter of life and death.

I.H.: So you think that singing about the ghetto is glorifying it?

E.G.: In a lot of respects, yes. Unless it's an honest observation. I mean how many people can make an honest observation about the same thing without it becoming a poppyshow [Gyanese patois for 'clownish behavior']?

I.H.: I read that you said, "There is no such thing as Rastafarian music".

E.G.: None.

I.H.: What about the early music, the historical Rastafarian music, the beginning that helped change the culture?

E.G.: It's not Rastafarian music, it's just music. The fact that a guy who calls

himself a Rastafarian sings it . . . you could say that that music emanated originally out of Africa and nobody is calling it African music.

I.H.: So Rastafarian, for you, is too small?

E.G.: I think it's dangerous for Black people to start to call themselves Rastafarians or Catholics or whatever it is. If you're a Black person — that's strictly what we're dealing with now, right? — then, I mean, within Black people there is already so much tribalism. You go to a country like Nigeria, for example, where one tribe is at the other one's throat and they can't communicate on a global level anymore because they're either Ibo or Yoruba or Hausa. And now you come and you have a Rasta Ibo and a Rasta Yoruba? It's something that Black people don't need on top of everything else.



Isabel Harry

ORCHESTRATING A PRESS CONFERENCE

After 'squashing' all comers, Eddy Grant talks to the media



"Well, rockers is the same dub music, you know, and maybe music that doesn't deal with the culture, maybe just deal with dance, like some people do now."

—Bob Marley, "Last U.S. Interview", *Class Magazine*, New York (August, 1983)

Why, in *Rolling Stone*, Eddy said he wouldn't even be caught dead with a spliff in his mouth! They said he didn't even speak with a patois accent! Eddy was just a regular guy who played music heavily accented with reggae! No messages in the music, no secret jargon! Just plain English, at last, with a beat! *Rolling Stone* even entitled its article: "Back from the dread!"

In a supreme twist of pop irony, the people who wanted African/Caribbean/Latin/Third World rhythms in their music but couldn't take the real thing and needed it diluted by white translators first (*The Police*, *Talking Heads*, *The Clash*, *Blondie*), now have "matured" (if you can believe the pop press) into being able to take the inventors of the original music. The first such "star" able to make this

crossover is Eddy, they say. Ironic because Eddy has learned how to use whitewash, in spades.

Reaching for the Top

Grant is just another black entertainer trying to make it in a white entertainment world. But he has succeeded in reaching Number 1 with "Electric Avenue", and so has his video of the same name. What Eddy had to do to attain this lofty position where black stars are rarer than hen's teeth was to increasingly refine the reggae sound so that it became as innocuous as, say, *The Police*, who play reggae so subtly that the group is constantly being credited with having totally invented its "unique sound", which is plagiarised from thousands of reggae songs that will never see the inside of a pop chart.

Well, refined reggae is fine, if we persist in defining ourselves as insatiable popsters desperate for the next beat. Is that it? The demographics experts tell us that we like what's being played on the radio; we love rock 'n roll; it's our indigenous right to fun. People cannot tolerate anything outside the medium, say the radio station owners, while radio is enforcing a sound that is, in fact, becoming increasingly repugnant to many.

How can we continue to have our life experiences diluted by these radio airheads? Are we really just fun

fanatics? Is it true that we never have enough rock 'n roll? According to today's music industry (MTV definitely included), the rock ethic is the only thing that must go on at all costs, because it really pays! This is why all commercial pop music must fit this strict rock format: it is selling lifestyle as much as the products advertised on the shows. Music and ads work hand in hand for the radio stations.

Within a whirling musical maelstrom of sex, drugs, manipulation, exploitation, and violence there came reggae, advocating peace, equality, love, herb, and social change. Interesting, but the industry ignored it, saying that, "no-one could make out the words".

The mainstream musicians, however, couldn't ignore the many layers of the music, the infectious beat, the focus on bass and drum, the use of synthesizer dub effects. But, said the execs, we still can't take these dreadlocked black people who speak a foreign language that sounds like bad English, who play a beat that sounds foreign. Do we let these guys tell us about music, worried the execs. No. Why? The industry moguls are still inventive with their reasons. "No-one likes the music." "We can't understand the lyrics." The white fans, explained the execs half in jest, can't even mimic the hair styles because they don't have the same hair . . . knowing that for some fans, the hair styles of their heroes are more important by far than the

music or the lyrics. The reasons were rationalized to death until everyone believed them, execs, fans, press, everyone. It's true, people don't relate to reggae. And, since it can't be heard on the radio, tastes in that direction can't even be developed. MTV won't even play black videos because they're "outside" the white-bread rock 'n roll ethics.

So imagine Eddy Grant in all this. He's paid his dues in the industry; he's had rock 'n roll hits, he LOVES rock 'n roll, no problem. He's worn white tuxedos, played white grand pianos, he knows schtick. Through the years, he's developed know-how in the industry, and through trial and error and hard work suddenly he hits the jackpot on the rock charts. Though his music is suffused with reggae, he knows that what has kept reggae music down is the laid-back attitude of its proponents, their desire not to be tampered with commercially, and that "foreignness" (in language, appearance, lifestyle) that drives record execs nuts, mainly because they don't know how to "sell" it. Punks they could understand, but Rastas, no way.

Eddy knew that the record execs needed a little coddling with their reggae. He must have known that he wouldn't just "get away" with looking like a Rasta and playing reggae, no matter how commercial his sound. That is probably why Grant makes sure that everyone understands

I.H.: Do you think that it had any value in the sense that it made a lot of people aware, and it gave a lot of people who felt they had no identity whatsoever a chance to stand up and feel all right?

E.G.: Perfect. Perfect. I agree with you completely. But, by the same token there were people, I mean, Marcus Garvey — from where the whole doctrine came basically — who did a lot of that. People like Malcolm X did a lot of that . . . King, James Brown, Mohammed Ali, so it's not something that you can polarise and say well, look, this is the corner that it belongs in because there are many people with the same message. You don't break up a people because of that. Is the old Black man not valid because he is not a Rastafarian? Is that what people are saying? We mustn't be fooled.

I can understand a Black person who has been all his life kept down by white

people, being abused by white people all through history, saying, "If ever there's a God, I hope that he's a Black man." I can understand that form of dogma, because basically there is White Dogma which says that God is a personification of a white person. You know what I'm saying? So I can understand it. But, why is it going to be Haile Selassie, just because he's a direct descendent of . . . You know what I'm saying? If people want to say that, then fine — because he is a personification of something that is Black and they glorify it and fine.

But we have to be aware of romanticizing in very much the same way as White people have done through the years because basically, as it's going to happen, Black people are now a new awakened people by virtue of time.

I.H.: So they are free as individuals?

E.G.: The time has come for them to assert themselves as individuals and go

on out into the world and bring about this social change.

I.H.: Do you feel that Bob Marley, in his songs about Jah, repatriation, do you think that he was always singing literally? Repatriation seemed to mean so many things, togetherness, a common consciousness . . . ?

E.G.: Well, I really don't know what the hell Bob Marley meant. I know that Bob wrote some good songs and I think that we should take them as that.

I.H.: Do you think that he was breaking ground?

E.G.: Breaking ground? I think that the only relevance to me that Bob Marley had as another artist is as a guy who wrote some good songs. And at the end of the day, situations were manipulated to create a certain image, based on certain things that either Bob Marley was or he wasn't, which I'm not prepared to expound on because I don't know. But I am an artist and there are

many, many artists and there are many people who write things of some sociological significance but we have to take things in the cold light of realization. It's great that people can interpret lyrics to mean whatever it is that they want. If Bob meant repatriation as something to do with togetherness, then fine. But I don't think so.

I.H.: What about the locks? Historically, didn't some people back there make it possible to do that where it hadn't been done before?

E.G.: This is something that belongs to us, it is my natural right. All I am doing in growing my hair like this is asserting my natural right. This has been going on for hundreds of years. It's only a question that most of us were brainwashed into not knowing it because of commerce. Some guy invented a comb, and so we used it, all of us. And I saw photographs of Mau Mau fighters and they had their hair like this.

I saw Masai men with their hair like this. That awakened my thinking.

The Rasta guys saw the same things. There were people talking, people like Garvey who had seen these things, who had spoken these things and it just went on by word of mouth, 'You know a guy's hair can grow to thirty-six inches long?', 'Nah!', 'Oh yeah, there are people in eastern Africa doing it, all through Africa doing it.' And so on. And so somebody else does it. And so on.

I.H.: One more question. In *Rolling Stone* they said Eddy Grant speaks with not a trace of patois; I don't find that exactly, but I'm partial to patois . . .

E.G.: Why not? But why bother speaking patois to someone who can't understand? It's like speaking German to a Frenchman. The point is you want to be able to communicate easily. . .

I.H.: Do you think that personality-centred music will continue, now that

audiences are getting so huge that you can hardly see the personality on stage? Will there be some other kinds of concerts?

E.G.: I think it's important that they do have personalities, that the world has personalities, because they are the models. Everybody cannot be a leader. Everybody can't be out front. There are workers and there are drones and there's a hierarchy thing. It's important. I don't believe in the blatant commercialization of a personality to the point where he has no personality anymore, just a fabricated one. I believe that, yes, people should stand on stage and do what it is that people want them to do. Because it's a useful release for people.

I.H.: The model thing . . . well, I guess that's it, we're being watched.

E.G.: . . . like a hawk.

I.H.: Thanks a lot.

E.G.: My pleasure.



Eddy Grant
in Toronto Concert

"EVERYBODY CAN'T BE A LEADER
Everybody can't be out front.
There are workers and drones..."

that he is not one of 'them'. It also insures the people know he is 'unique'.

Since everyone is flirting with musical literacy these days, Grant gives them the sum of his experience: reggae, spouge (but be careful, don't call it that, it's too "unknown"), some Latin, some Africa (everyone is into Africa), some city-slick funk, some social comment. Social comment with a dance beat is very popular now. Don't forget the infectious beat, or the message will fall on deaf ears! Then, sex. Wear "de rigueur" mock leather skin-tight pants, black, with form-fitting t-shirt. Toss the locks around, but artfully, like you might imagine George Benson doing it, very non-threatening, just a part of the drag outfit, really.

In interviews, Eddy Grant comes off as guileless, ingenuous really, when it comes to his 'philosophy'. But even this guilelessness has its purpose in the marketing of Eddy Grant. His disavowals of "any religion, any drug, or any philosophy, aside from a very human one" work well as marketing strategies designed to sell records. You are looking at this year's version of the Third World Man, courtesy of CBS' marketing department. Enough suave commercial moves to cut it with the Big Boys who simply cannot take any threats at all to their positions in the music industry. You do not tell them what to do: you must join them. Which is apparently what Grant has done. Because he talks like them now. Like them, he denies the existence of Rastafarian music. Journalists have also bitten the marketing biscuit as they jump on the bandwagon proclaiming Grant the new "straight", "no trace of patois", "simple" star who is against "using God to sell records" like Bob Marley did.

Choose your own Poison

"Using God to sell records!" Who could resist the shock-value of that phrase? Not Eddy! But it is noteworthy that Eddy used everything BUT God to sell his records. "Selling God", which is where Eddy draws the line, just shows how far Grant is willing to go in discrediting Rasta reggae, which, remember, he says doesn't exist.

Bob Marley seemed pretty 'righteous' shouting "Jah!"

every two minutes, but Eddy Grant is aiming to appear even more righteous by declaring himself against "shoving religion down people's throats". Was Bob 'shoving', or was he just the first chart topper to sing about God in his successful, danceable hits? Grant in discrediting Marley puts himself in opposition to all this wholesale God-selling; but doesn't this mean that Grant is "shoving" his own songs down people's throats as well, just by virtue of being in the business of selling records? If Bob was 'shoving' Jah down our throats, then Eddy is 'shoving' "ooh baby, ooh baby" down our throats.

With Eddy Grant, the listener supposedly has the opportunity to hear "just music", but the phrase is itself a 'hype', based on what the marketers feel the public is ready to accept, nothing more. It's up to the listener to decide which selling techniques he/she will respond to, I guess. Grant's strategy is being built on the further negation of the credibility of musical pioneers whose influence is felt in all the pop songs of the moment — an influence interpreted by those fortunate enough to fit within the narrow framework of pop.

If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then *Culture Club*, *The Police*, and countless other successful bands flatter reggae unendingly. But not openly. And Eddy Grant, locking into place, says he's not one of them either.

All this is not to say that Grant *should* be one of 'them'. But what it does mean is that Grant is just another pop figure, nothing more, nothing less. This is in itself no small achievement, but one that is diminished by not being able to encompass more than its own success. Rather than expanding the boundaries of 'pop', he has reduced himself and his influences to fit the existing scene. There is nothing 'new' about Eddy Grant; the methods which sell him are more subtle, that's all.

The nasty thing about pop is that it doesn't allow for depth — roots, history. The pop press, which goes no deeper than the current styles, defines movements in overlapping waves which are never allowed to build. And, Eddy Grant is placing himself among the 'stylists' whose careers are built on the demise of other careers. There is not of the generosity of spirit that would allow him to create or share a little space on his pedestal; nothing short of rewriting music history will do for Grant, even if other people's inspiration must be destroyed in the process.

News flash: I hear that local reggae band *Messenjah* has gotten the "drop all that Jah and Rastafari stuff" treatment from WEA, who just remixed four of the band's songs to omit aforementioned references and give it a dance mix "suitable for white clubs". If people thought invoking Jah was banal, I wonder how they'll react to this new trend in expurgated reggae. They probably won't notice.

THE YELLOW KID

MIDI ONODERA

AS EARLY AS 1895 BRITISH COLUMBIA HAD PASSED legislation which denied Japanese Canadians the right to franchise and which restricted employment in fields such as forestry, public health nursing and law enforcement. Waves of discrimination continued, climaxing with the enforcement of the War Measures Act and the inevitable victimization during World War II.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941, the United States allied with Canada against Japan and Germany. This portion of World War II is well documented. Within a year, Canada and the U.S. with all of the righteous morality of governments at war, pursued policies of oppressive action within their borders. Thousands of Japanese Canadians and Americans on the west coast of these countries were evacuated and interned.



photos courtesy of Midi Onodera

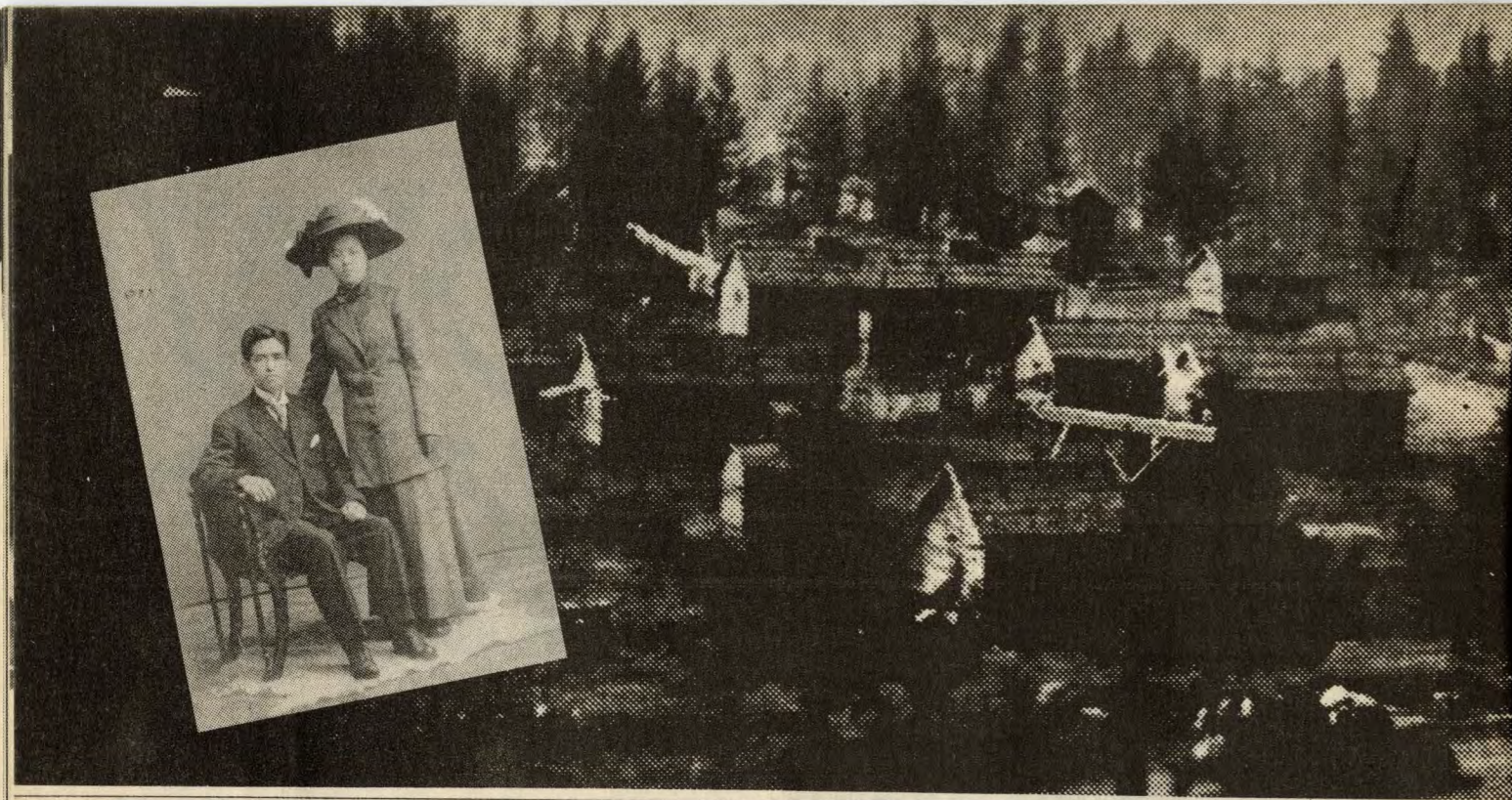
Ba-chan, Grandmother

AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER SHE HAD grey hair, except when she came back from the hair-dresser's when it would be carefully tinted with a light blue rinse. Her gold-rimmed glasses sometimes slipped down her nose when she laughed and exposed the twinkle in her warm brown eyes. Occasionally she wore a lavender sweater with small matching buttons and a beaded floral pattern stitched on front. While making mochi she rolled up her sleeves and knelt on one of the kitchen chairs intensely pounding the gooey rice mixture. When she spoke of Japan and read me bed-time stories about the "peach boy" and the "snow cranes" her excitement enveloped me like the strong smelling incense she burned at night. I was proud to be Japanese and especially proud of my grandmother.

Sansei, Third Generation

OUTSIDE. WE WERE THE ONLY JAPANESE family in the neighbourhood. I was ashamed. "Go bomb Pearl Harbour". I tried to tell them that I didn't have anything to do with it but they would only reply, "Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, look at these . . ." I tried so hard to be like everyone else. I didn't want to stand out because I looked different. I didn't understand. I was ashamed.

Up until grade eight I had managed to assimilate into the community quite well; that is, until I was reminded of my differences once again. A girl from Japan began classes and I was put in charge. The extent of communication consisted of naming different Japanese foods. My grandmother had moved away three years earlier and my knowledge of the language had slipped quite drastically. All those years of



pretending I was not who I was were wasted. I resented the teacher for centering me out. I wanted to be like everyone else.

I am sansei, third generation. I denied my roots by denying myself. Like most Canadians, I blamed what happened to the Japanese on themselves. I blamed my ancestors. If the government said they were spies and loyalists to Japan I was inclined to believe them. It only made sense to deny them the right to vote, take away their homes, separate families and imprison them in shacks like animals. They were, after all, different. Different from the North American way of life.

Issei, First Generation

IT WAS AGAINST MY NATURE TO QUESTION the powers of authority. I was careful to prove my loyalty to Canada. There was no choice. *Kodomo no tame*: for the sake of the children.

My family was separated, my home sold and my possessions confiscated. I allowed them to herd me into the converted livestock buildings in Hastings Park, used as temporary accommodations. Little food, no privacy, lice and maggots. We did not have any choice. They took away my means of living, my fishing boat, my job. I lost my self-esteem and my rights as a person. I wanted to prove my loyalty. This was the only way.

There was nothing we could do to prevent the relocation. We saw the external prejudices around us and we felt the knives of government stab us in the

back. We would go calmly. As Canadians, as families, we would face the unknown together.

Nisei, Second Generation

WE DID NOT LEAVE AS FAMILIES. WE LEFT AS mothers and young children. We left as men and boys to work in road camps. We protested the separation of families. We occupied the immigration building and the offices of the Tairiku newspaper. We were angry. There had been no provocation on our part and little or no evidence of our allegiance to Japan. It was too late. We had lost. We were sent to internment camps in Angler and Petawawa, Ontario. We shared our plight from behind barbed-wire with French Canadians who had fought conscription. When my father died during an avalanche while working in a road camp back in British Columbia they did not allow me to attend his funeral. They were afraid I would not return. I was an enemy alien.

We left our home in Vancouver to go to the interior. Our new home was an old ghost town, Kaslo. There were several of these makeshift communities: Greenwood, Sandon, Tashme, Lemon-Creek, New Denver, Solcan and Kaslo. The evacuation affected over 22,000 Japanese and Japanese Canadians, over three-quarters of whom were to pass through one of these camps. For a young child it became an adventure, full of mystery and uncertainty. For many of the older Niseis, however, it meant an interruption in their education and careers, loss of friendships they left behind and an increased burden

of prejudice and sacrifice.

Winters were the hardest. The small, carelessly assembled shacks were little protection against the blowing snow and freezing temperatures outside. When spring came, a new life embraced the camp. We had cherry blossom ceremonies and planted vegetable gardens. Since we could not attend regular school with the Caucasian children, we were restricted to classes taught by a few Japanese teachers and some of the older children in the community. Unfortunately, we were not protected from the malicious insults and frequent fights provoked by the neighbouring children.

In February 1945, we were informed that policy had been changed. Niseis could now officially join the army as translators. Some of the men in the camps jumped at the opportunity. I was still bitter. Had we spent two years of our lives in futile imprisonment? Had we wasted our energies trying to prove our loyalty only to be told it didn't really matter in the end? I would not give my life to a country that had destroyed my rights. As far as I was concerned the war was over.

In April of the same year, the R.C.M.P. was authorized by the British Columbia Security Commission to come to the camps and arrange for Japanese and Japanese Canadian citizens to go to Japan. Under the segregation programme, those choosing Japan were to relinquish their British citizenship and become Japanese Nationalists. The other option was to face re-establishment east of the Rockies, unexpected difficulties of employment and

possibly further separation of our families. Some of the Isseis who had lost everything and those who were not naturalized citizens had no choice but to return to Japan. Their children, Canadian born, faced the decision of separation or resettlement in a strange country. We did not sign but decided to face the unknown prejudices beyond the mountains.

Eiplogue

I AM NOT BITTER NOR AS ANGRY AS I WAS. I no longer have any reason to resent the passive resistance of my grandparents or my parents. I have, however, a renewed determination to question any absolute authority. I am Japanese Canadian, Sansei, and I am proud. I will not forget and I will continue to fight against the irrational prejudices and injustices committed in the democratic paradox. The imprisonment and personal hardship which the Japanese Canadians and Americans endured remain as historical facts to educate today's society. Permitting such unjust acts as these to occur in the future would only confirm and reinforce the shadowy events of 1942.

"The Yellow Kid" was a character with big ears and a bald head featured in *Hogan's Alley*, a cartoon series by Richard Outcault, circa 1896. Midi Onodera is an experimental filmmaker, visual artist and writer living and working in Toronto.



WETA Television (Washington D.C.)

Scenes from *The Great Nitty Gritty*. Box, lower right: Performers featured in the 1980 television series, *Jumpstreet*.

Raymond Boyd

THE BLACK THE RED AND THE NITTY GRITTY

AN INTERVIEW WITH OSCAR BROWN JR. NORMAN 'OTIS' RICHMOND

NORMAN 'OTIS' RICHMOND: Your last album was with Atlantic, right?

OSCAR BROWN JR.: Yeah, *Fresh*.

N.O.R.: Was that with *Lone Ranger*?

O.B.Jr.: No, that was on *Brother, Where Are You?* I made three records with Atlantic: *Movin' On*, *Brother Where Are You?* and *Fresh*, which was the latest. Jerry Butler produced the record.

N.O.R.: Jerry Butler was with *The Impressions*. Didn't you record *Brother Where Are You?* with *The Impressions* once?

O.B.Jr.: No, but I've recorded it several times.

N.O.R.: Are you recording anything now?

O.B.Jr.: We are recording elements of *The Great Nitty Gritty*, but I'm not recording that myself. My son is producing that with his partner Dale Williams.

N.O.R.: What about concerts? Are you doing many things like you did in Buffalo?

O.B.Jr.: Without a record out — something behind you — it's a drag and I've chosen not to do that.

N.O.R.: I've just heard the Albert Collins version of "But I Was Cool" on his new record on *Alligator*. What do you think of it?

O.B.Jr.: I haven't heard it. Do you think it will sell?

N.O.R.: Albert Collins sells a lot of records.

O.B.Jr.: In that case, I'm glad to hear that. I'll call and try to get some money. Hey, cool; I'll call the publisher about that.

N.O.R.: You didn't know it was out?

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O.B.Jr.: They don't tell me. I'm the last to know.

N.O.R.: You know, Richard Pryor does this routine, "When Your Woman Leaves You" — I think it came from "Cool".

O.B.Jr.: I'll probably get to steal from him . . . I'll get him. Everybody gets everybody . . . I mean, everybody borrows from everybody else. I can imagine that Rich would do it. In fact Flip Wilson *did* "But I Was Cool" on television and he did a helluva a job with it. I don't object to that at all.

N.O.R.: You did a television series for P.B.S.: *Jump Street*. It lasted 13 weeks. My only criticism of that was it was too short.

O.B.Jr.: Well, I guess that's a legitimate criticism then.

N.O.R.: I can't see how you can get the history of Black Music in 13 weeks, but I know that's not on you.

O.B.Jr.: No. They had \$1,700,000, and presumably they spent it. But I

FUSE

don't know what they spent it on. But if money came from the federal government, with Reagan in there now, it's not likely for that to happen again. And the private sector is not too eager to do anything that's promoting Black culture, at this stage of the game they aren't.

N.O.R.: Have you heard about Randy Daniels? He used to be with C.B.S. He went to Nigeria and they gave him \$2 million to do a TV thing there.

O.B.Jr.: I thought about Africa at one point but I was kind of discouraged. In fact I'm talking to some African guys now about *Nitty Gritty*.

A couple of Nigerian brothers are here. One of them came to see the show. But no, I haven't really thought about going to Nigeria myself. I'm not sure. I had thought about it at one point, but I was not encouraged — heard it was too difficult to get in, to do business there. I don't know how Randy Daniels did it, but I don't know how to do it.

N.O.R.: In terms of that 49/51% thing?

O.B.Jr.: Oh yeah, I heard about that — you mean what you could send out and what you could keep? No, I heard that, but that wasn't really the problem. I was ready to just go into exile, but I wanted to go and be able to do something; I understood it's kind of a military government there and rather restrictive. So, I didn't want to jump out of the frying pan and into the fire.

N.O.R.: That was a few years ago?

O.B.Jr.: Yeah, 1979 or 1980, just before *Jump Street*.² I was in Washington, D.C. trying to make contacts to go to Africa. But I might as

well stay here and fight it out.

N.O.R.: I saw you in the early '60's in Los Angeles. That's when you had out *Bid 'Em In* and *Sin and Soul*.

O.B.Jr.: I still owe the record company for having gone into the studio to make that.

N.O.R.: That's one of those old record company tricks.

O.B.Jr.: Yeah, Columbia records.

N.O.R.: Can you say how much?

O.B.Jr.: Oh, about three or four grand. I mean, you know, all the entire cost of the record is on the artist. They advance the entire cost of it and they re-pay themselves out of your royalties. And you're only making 2% out of 90%. So, at that rate, it takes you quite a while to recoup, maybe \$20,000, especially with them keeping the books.

N.O.R.: Well they just re-issued *Sin and Soul* in the last two or three years.

O.B.Jr.: I know. It's a collector's item. It comes out every ten years. I mean they're making money, obviously. They wouldn't re-issue it if they weren't. But I still owe them.

N.O.R.: Wouldn't your music be selling in Europe and Japan?

O.B.Jr.: Yeah, it does alright, but there's nobody actually pushing it. It would take a more concerted business effort that I'm able to mount. I don't have a manager or agent as such. I've had some, and I've had some bad experiences and I guess I'm just gun-shy about it. And there's only certain things that they're really prepared to help you do. If I want to be in the theatre, there's nothing an agent or manager can do about that unless somebody's producing something I can be in. If I want to be in movies they can't do much about that unless somebody's making a picture and there's a part for me in it. So there ain't no point in trying to do that through them 'cause that's sort of dried up all the way around. Not only that, there are relatively few parts that I would even want to do, anyhow. And almost the same thing is true of television. I can have a manager or agent trying to get me on television but there aren't many television shows I want to be in particularly, right now, that I can think of, unless I had my own. And even for years when they had the "Sonny and Cher Show", I didn't want to be on it. I was on "The Flip Wilson Show" once, and that was pretty cool. That was kind of a fluke, but it was alright. But even

there, I was always kind of scared that they'd give me something to do and I'd have to have a big argument with them about it.

N.O.R.: I can understand that.

O.B.Jr.: You know, 'cause I wasn't going to do it.

There's a certain kind of image thing that you have to be conscious of when you're doing that. So you don't want to do anything that will compromise the thing or make you look foolish, or make anyone else look foolish. And that tended to be their stock and trade. But anyway, that's a moot question because all that's just gone away. So there's not much that I can see.

Now a concert/record thing — if that would happen, that would be cool and it would lead to other things. But in the absence of that, I have just, really just sort of drifted along. Things have come up, like *Jump Street*, that was a good thing. It didn't make a whole lot of money for me, but it was damn good exposure and associated me with something that I learned from, and was glad to be associated with.

Again, from that whole image point of view, that is the image that I want to project. And similarly, when I came back to Chicago, the chance to do this with *Nitty Gritty* presented itself.

N.O.R.: The play, "The Great Nitty Gritty" — what's that about and how is it doing?

O.B.Jr.: Well it's struggling for money, but it's going quite well in many respects. As a show, it's got great reviews, rave reviews, and since then it's even gotten better because the kids have got a chance to ply their craft in front of audiences; the audience is always a great teacher. So that aspect is going well. We've been heard by all kinds of people, like the school board superintendent, Dr. Love. Muhammad Ali has been there and a whole bunch of people that we think could assist us in bringing audiences to the show. Muhammad was there and he loved it. So with the general response that we've got, we think we'll be able to sell it.

The show deals with young Black kids. We went into the public housing development and auditioned some talent and with this talent told a story of gang wars and gang violence in Chicago. A youngster was shot at the foot of the statue of Pointe Jean Bap-

tiste de Sable — the first settler, other than the Indians in this area. His statue comes to life and offers to save the life of the dying youngster if the youngster will enter de Sable's peace mission to end the gang wars. He was a peace-maker among the Indians and that is how they came to settle in the Chicago area. The two take an odyssey, a journey around Chicago and evaluate the city to see if Willie Boy can assist de Sable to bring peace to Chicago.

N.O.R.: *The Great Nitty Gritty* — are you going to take it to Broadway — off Broadway?

O.B.Jr.: Well I would love to do that. And go into movies. We have all those kinds of aspirations.

N.O.R.: Your current record deal — I see that you were supposed to do something on Scott Joplin, but the record company refused it so you're going to do something on reggae or something?

O.B.Jr.: That was a project with several people about Scott Joplin. We made a demo that went to Motown and they thought it wasn't commercial. But I thought it might be commercialized more if we put some reggae feeling to it. But I haven't really had time to experiment with that yet because *The Great Nitty Gritty* intervened.

N.O.R.: How many plays have you been in?

O.B.Jr.: I've done two *Joy* plays. I've done a whole bunch of plays, starting with *Kids and Company* back in 1960. *Joy* was the next and then *Summer in the City* and *Layers of Sunshine*. *Shadow* was a program I did for the Chicago public schools and I've done many as an artist in residence — at Howard, at Hunter and here at Malcolm X in Chicago. Each time we did a different play. And then here in Chicago I did *In the Beginning*, that was a show taken from the Book of Genesis. We played that here for a while and then took it to Memphis and to Philadelphia, and then the latest thing is this.

And so, rather than be around playing joints here and there — you know, going to New York and playing where I could, or playing with what I could get in L.A. now, without a record out, with a kind of, well it's actually a militant reputation among the business people; so that doesn't enhance anything as far as getting gigs is concerned.

N.O.R.: Do you think the militant image is rightly so?

O.B.Jr.: Well..., like I had...ah... Yes, absolutely *right*. You see what the militant image stems from is the fact that I want to be in theatre independent of white people — no matter what you want to say, I mean you could say diddle, diddle, diddle, but if they ain't approving it, financing it, and having the last word on it, then that's revolutionary. So in that respect, I've had problems. I've had Muhammad Ali on Broadway singing, "that's all over now, mighty whitey", and stuff like that. That didn't popularize me or endear me with the powers that be on Broadway, 'cause that ain't what they want to discuss. So that presents a problem.

N.O.R.: The Harold Washington thing, how do you assess that whole situation?

O.B.Jr.: Well it's a great joyous occasion for the Black folks in Chicago, I'll tell you that. A potential power base — well, a power base with a great potential, is what exists right now. I went down there the night he won — I mean you never saw so many proud coloured folks in your life. I mean they was happy. We did it! We did it! We did it! — politically in Chicago. Black folks are awake as never before. Chicago itself, altogether, is awake. So that's hot stuff.

N.O.R.: How did the voter patterns break down?

O.B.Jr.: He got damn near all the Black vote — 98 or 95%, 18% of the white vote and 52% or 54% of the Hispanic vote... the Puerto Ricans have tended to be with us, whereas the Mexicans have been with the white folks.

N.O.R.: Is your father [Oscar Brown Sr.] still alive?

O.B.Jr.: Yeah, he's 87.

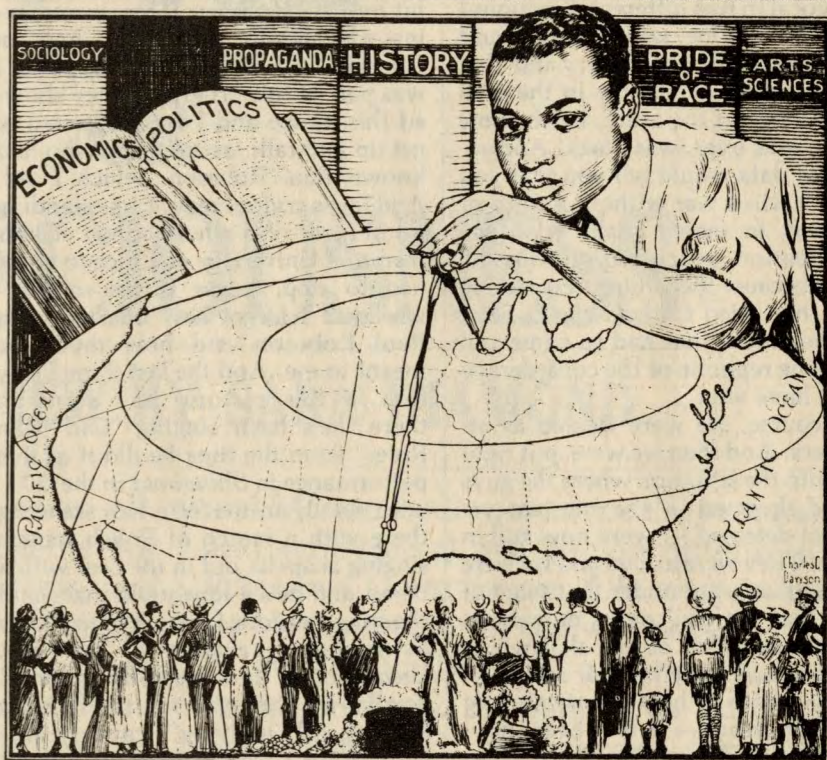
N.O.R.: The 49th State Movement — that's something I've always been interested in. How close was his movement to The Republic of New Africa and to what the Honorable Elijah Muhammad was talking about in terms of 5 states or 4 states, or whatever he was asking for?

O.B.Jr.: Well, there was 30 or 40 years difference for one thing. So that it was in a different context to a certain extent. What they were talking about was a new state in the United States where Black people would have hegemony, economic and political, and could fend for themselves. It's absolutely necessary that we have something like that, but I guess it was probably New Africa that talked

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49th State Compass

CHARTING THE DESTINY OF THE NEGRO IN THE UNITED STATES



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March
1936

Oscar Brown Sr. edited *The 49th State Compass* in the thirties, a monthly dedicated to "the permanent betterment of the desperate plight of the Negro in the U.S."

about something like that too.

N.O.R.: Yes, 5 states, right? Did your father's movement have a geographical area that he wanted?

O.B.Jr.: Not particularly. He hadn't got that far. See I think the main thing with that movement was that Black folks have to have a chance to find out that integration ain't what's happening. And so, when you start talking to them about separation, when you start talking to them about that in the '30's, well that was just out. You didn't get much support for that. You would find a lot more support by the '60's when Muhammad and Bill Perry and those people were talking. But back then, it was a real good idea that was way ahead of its time.

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N.O.R.: There was another guy by the name of Albert Anderson that talked about that in the 1910's. I've found his name mentioned a couple of times and I was trying to find something about him.

O.B.Jr.: There's always been some considerable sentiment about some sort of separation. That's our whole problem here. There's no real political... The question of slavery — they tried to settle without really raising it, without really dealing with it. And that's the problem we suffer from now, and politically, we weren't brought into the body politic with any due process of law. We weren't prepared. We didn't read, we didn't understand the system. And it's just now, a hundred years later, some nig-

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gers in Chicago are finally catching on.

N.O.R.: The sentiment that you had, it seems to me from my study of history, that Blacks in the U.S. have been very vocal about the back to Africa thing, in terms of the Liberia situation.

O.B.Jr.: Well, Blacks have been very vocal in two different directions I would think. One, was that they built up the nation from labour; and that they rescued the country in the civil war. A third of the army, by the time the war was over, was Black. And so, just that data would tell you that you couldn't win a war without a third of the army in there. That's what the emancipation proclamation was all about, because the whites were rioting when they tried to draft them. So it was the Blacks that had to come and rescue the republic or the confederacy would have won.

Of course, we were treated as interlopers. And then we were put right back into the situation where the guys we had deserted — the 'masters' we had just defeated — were now still in charge. They were armed and we were not. And we went under that reign of terror that the civil rights movement finally ended. But during that whole period of time, any kind of escape — back to Africa or help America try to fulfill her dream — We've been moving in two different directions, all in the point of trying to get out from under whitey.

N.O.R.: What are your views on performing in South Africa?

O.B.Jr.: Well, I don't want the South Africans and they don't want me. Somebody brought my name up to them and they said, "Oh no." I was told about it, but not because I wanted to go there. I can't imagine under what circumstances I would go there.

N.O.R.: I'm sure you're aware of a big cultural boycott that's being circulated and a big list of all the artists that have gone there, Black and white, and it seems to be taking on pretty big proportions because Jimmy Cliff was just banned from Zimbabwe the other day because he performed in South Africa . . .

I saw you and The Impressions and a lot of other people at Adams West in Los Angeles. And now, when I have an opportunity to see the people that I haven't seen for 20 years out of all those people, it seems that you are still the

same type of person. When I say same type, I mean a lot of people have backed off from what they were doing.

O.B.Jr.: Well, yeah, I'm there. I'm stuck.

I saw a picture last night of Paul Robeson. There's this movie, *Robeson the Artist*. In this thing it traced his life as an artist, and man; I realized I got bit by Paul Robeson. They were having a Robeson celebration here in Chicago, it was his birthday, and I was part of this program. They showed this movie and I was supposed to get up and talk, as someone who had known Paul Robeson, which I did. And I was crying, man. I was standing up in front of a whole bunch of kids from the University of Chicago and I had to stop, 'cause I was so overwhelmed. I forgot how much I loved Paul Robeson and how much he meant to me. And the last thing I saw him in this picture, he's standing there, he's been singing "Old Man River" from the time he did it as live performance in *Showboat* in the '20's, until finally in the '60's he's standing there with a bunch of Polish miners singing acapella out in the coal with a beret, and he's a lonely old man, and the song has gone from, "We just keep living until we're dying" to "We'll just keep fighting until we're dying" until finally at the end it's, "I'll keep fighting 'till I'm dying," 'cause he was completely isolated. Man, it was so tragic.

In a sense, I'm stuck with that, because I ain't quittin'. He didn't quit. He became irrelevant, maybe I will. But he didn't quit.

N.O.R.: I don't think you'll become irrelevant.

O.B.Jr.: Well in the sense, while Paul Robeson was alive, all that he set up moved into the civil rights struggle. Paul didn't move there. He was alive then, throughout the whole period of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King and the sit-ins and the whole civil rights struggle, but he was still talkin' integration and he was still talkin' from another time, from another place. The whole move to blackness, and all that stuff just left him, because he had been through, first of all, a tremendous shock. He had had a tremendous career just knocked down, gradually whittled away in the America that he sang *Ballad For America* for. He really loved this country, loved humanity and he just wound up with his whole

career gradually wiped out. And the left turned around and said, "Jesus, we made a whole bunch of mistakes with Paul, we can't help him now." He wound up just leaving the country after his last concerts here, which were no longer downtown. He was doing them out here in the park in the summertime or in a Black church, a Baptist church in the winter time, nobody hardly there but a few old white folks, but mostly just ordinary, common Black folks. I was at Paul's funeral standing outside, but that was nothing compared to him. But that film we saw yesterday, ooh man. I don't know when it came out. Sidney Poitier does the narration. There's scenes of him playing Othello. Ooh man, first time I saw Paul Robeson, I was a kid at University of Wisconsin. He came up doing *Othello*. God Damn! We'd just finished studying *Othello* the day before they opened. I loved that. And then years later I became a communist and became closely associated with Robeson. We used to see him, and we used to come and sit at his feet and listen to him describe the life of an artist; what an artist was, what the people were, and we took it to heart. Or I did.

N.O.R.: Oh, so you're in the Party, the CP?

O.B.Jr.: Yeah, for about 10 years. They kicked me out for being a negro nationalist, which is why I joined.

N.O.R.: George Jackson, I read his writings and he said he was an African, and he was trying to become a communist too. And I couldn't see how, I think, you could be both of those. The way the left is in the United States, specifically, when a black man says he's an African you can't be in the Communist Party which is controlled by white folks.

O.B.Jr.: I don't know what the party's into now particularly . . . the last time I met with them . . . from time to time I do talk to party folks. But I think they disagree with a lot of my thinking. I feel there's probably a military-industrial complex in Russia that's just as military, industrial and complex as the one here. And the people who are employed in both have the same interests and that is keeping up some shit so that they can keep the appropriations coming.

¹ Earlier this year Oscar Brown Jr. performed at the *Tralfamodore Cafe* in Buffalo, N.Y. (See review, "Afro Blue", FUSE, Summer '83.)

² *Jump Street* was a television series on the history of Black music, which was shown on P.B.S. in 1981.

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WILL THAT BE THE MORAL LEPERS DISCUSS FEMINISM AND THE MUSIC SCENE CASH OR CONSCIOUSNESS

AN INTERVIEW BY SARA DIAMOND

The Moral Lepers is a five piece all-women's band, which has been together for two years playing clubs, concerts and benefits in Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle. In December 1982 they released a six song e.p., after which guitarist Bonnie Williams left the band and Janet Lumb joined on sax. Elaine Stef (guitar), Rachel Melas (bass), Conny Nowe (drums), Janet Lumb (sax)

and Marian Lydbrooke (vocals, percussion and synthesizer) will be contributing to a *Women's Compilation Album* (produced by *Voicespondence*) and will be performing in *WOMENSBANDS*, a women's music series sponsored by *A-Space* in Toronto. Sara Diamond interviewed the *Moral Lepers* on August 31st at Conny's house in Vancouver, B.C.

SARA: What kind of themes recur in your lyrics?

MARIAN: I suppose I write mostly about things that other people aren't writing about, a view of women's experiences which comes out of my own experience, and some anti-nuke stuff. Rachel writes lyrics too.

RACHEL: Once a year I write a song that's good.

MARIAN: I do songs like "Family Love", which have to do with violence and abuse in the family, which isn't written about that much — and is something experienced by women primarily. I don't know any other band that has written about the abuse of women and children.

SARA: Quite a few of them encourage it.

MARIAN: Immigration is another [issue]. And after the arrests of the *Vancouver Five*, I wrote "Burden of Dreams", inspired by a Werner Her-

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Barbara Pratt
CONNIE: "We all work part-time or are on welfare and we're scavengers..."

zog movie. It's about how we have these creative visions and we fall over ourselves trying to get them achieved. I suppose it's basically, 'Is this what we're living for?' Sometimes I feel like a maniac trying to achieve stuff and not being able to . . . being totally bogged down by everyday details that

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drive me crazy. But I have great faith in dreams — I suppose that's what the song is about too. Five years ago I was sitting in London and I had this idea, I really wanted to be in a good all women's rock band, and I had the belief that I could do it. And now I'm in a very good all women's band!

SARA: Do you have favorite songs, either as a band or as an individual?

ELAINE: We've got some songs that have lasted a long time. We are able to continue to play them, and not get sick of them at all which in my mind makes for a good song. Each time it's a challenge to play it.

SARA: Which songs are those?

ELAINE: For me, "Music is your Body", "Beryl Bean", and "China Rag".

SARA: Which do you write first, the music or the lyrics?

MARIAN: I suppose the music starts and then I write some lyrics to



Barbara Pratt
 MARIAN: "It's nice to see punks and dykes and all these people in the same room..."

it. It has happened that I've written lyrics and then we write music to it, or I fit them into a riff that's suitable. Some of them have a melody line of their own. The lyrics just come into my head, the music invokes them. I prefer it if the music can make me want to write some lyrics.

Sometimes I try to avoid just writing something that comes off the top of my head; I try to be a bit more conscious about it. I try and write lyrics that people can understand, that aren't too obscure.

SARA: Do you work as a consciously political band? Do you try to develop anything in people's experience of your music beyond sheer enjoyment?

MARIAN: I think that happens. I don't know if everybody sees it that way. Five women getting up on stage and playing music, the way that we work together cooperatively, is definitely something that comes from my political background.

CONNIE: We are five politically conscious people who conduct ourselves in a politically conscious way. This comes out in our music as much as anything else.

MARIAN: I've been a political activist for fifteen years on and off. When I got into music it was a really useful release for me.

ELAINE: As a band we work as a political unit as well. We're concerned about certain issues and we have done benefits ever since our inception. Our first gig was a Women Against Prisons gig, to help raise money for a bail fund for women prisoners, because there's a lot of women prisoners who, for instance, can't get a few hundred dollars bail together and end up in Oakalla [B.C. prison] and their kids get taken

Uncle Jim, he grabs your dress, He wants to fondle and carress Dad says you're telling lies Mum's suffering emotional stress.

—excerpt from *Family Love*

away from them while they're waiting for their trial to come up. Just because they're poor.

MARIAN: And we've done benefits for Lesbian Information Line; The Service, Office and Retail Workers Union of Canada; eviction parties; a squatters' benefit, *Free the Five* — we've done lots of those things and we're going to do more!

SARA: Could you review the issue of the Vancouver Five. It's clearly a central concern of yours.

MARIAN: Five people have been arrested and charged with the bombing of the B.C. Hydro sub-station, the Red Hot Video [video porn outlets], conspiracy to sabotage the military base at Cold Lake — where the Cruise Missile is about to be tested — and other charges related to environmental, anti-nuke and women's issues. They've also now been charged with the Litton Systems bombings, where the parts for the Cruise Missile are made.

Their trial is happening right now in B.C. They're having to go through four trials here in B.C. It's going to be one of the most important political events of our time.

SARA: So the benefits have been part of a defense campaign to get them out of jail and the charges dropped.

MARION: The legal fees are huge, as well as costs for things such as mailing and printing. We need hundreds of thousands of dollars.

CONNIE: It's basically consciousness raising.

Will that be Cash or Consciousness?

SARA: How do you see playing benefits and playing the commercial market fitting together?

MARIAN: We like playing benefits. Sometimes we feel that we haven't really been appreciated financially; people expect us to play for free because it's a benefit and we have been a bit pissed off. That's improved recently, now we usually get a set

amount of money.

SARA: That is an issue for a lot of political artists and musicians, because there's an assumption sometimes that if it's creative work, it doesn't take hard labour to put together.

Where do you locate yourselves commercially? Do you try to work for money and where?

RACHEL: A band needs money; to record and to do projects and to travel, so we have to generate money somehow or it comes out of our pockets.

CONNIE: We play in commercial venues also, but we don't want to compromise ourselves to the point of playing in clubs where people expect us to look a certain way or act a certain way. We're totally willing to play in clubs where people are looking for something different and they have to pay to get in and aren't necessarily looking for something political.

RACHEL: They're going to get it whether they like it or not if they come near us.

CONNIE: They are looking for something musically non-commercial.

RACHEL: Being in a band though, you also have the pressures of the public to contend with because the public wants a certain thing from you and they want to hear songs they're familiar with and they want to hear them over and over, plus you have a gig happening maybe in a week or three days and you're really dissatisfied with what you're doing and you want to be writing some songs or jamming or getting into some new area, but you have this gig in three days so you have to practice for it.

MARIAN: It's a constant struggle between doing gigs and writing new material because it takes time with new material and as soon as you get a gig BANG! you've got to practice.

SARA: Where have you been performing in the last while?

ELAINE: We're going to play in Seattle for the third time tomorrow and we've played Victoria a few

times, as well as Vancouver. And we have a gig in Toronto in October.

RACHEL: We hope to have a gig in New York soon too because we brought a band up from New York, 3 Teens Kill Four, and did a gig with them at City Space: one of them runs a club down there so they said that they'd give us a gig there.

SARA: Do you consider your music Canadian in its content?

CONNIE: I'm personally not so nationalistic about whether what I do fits into what people in northern Alberta like. We're North Americans and we are very much a product of that culture. Well, Marian's from England, but she's been here for four years. I was born in Holland, Janet's Chinese, Rachel's from New York — I would say that we are North Americans.

RACHEL: I think we're really west coast. We're so isolated out here because we're a thousand miles from the nearest Canadian city. We're isolated, we're in the basement. We create our own stuff. We're not listening to synthopbands.

ELAINE: There's no formula to what we're doing, we just cook it up in the basement.

CONNIE: I asked one of the people from 3 Teens, "Well, how do you find the West Coast scene in comparison with what's going on in New York?" because there's 13 million people in New York and 1300 bands. They told me that they found it very innocent and unto itself. The fact that we're bushed here doesn't stop us from being creative. There's no "Well, this is what they're doing now so we better go and create that guitar sound." I don't think that we're really that influenced although all of us have listened to different kinds of music like reggae, African, blues, punk, British and American pop.

MARIAN: I think that we're more or less aware of the state of the art, though. That's important; we're not doing something that was done ten years ago.

SARA: One of the things that has been said about the Vancouver scene is that it's heavily influenced by the American West Coast. Do you agree?

CONNIE: I don't think that's true. There's a big hardcore scene down there and that's not true here. I get a decayed feeling from some of the stuff going on in Los Angeles. The city is so decayed and dirty and I think it really



Cam Garrett
 "Collectively things take longer, but in the long run it's a success." (l to r) Rachel, Conny, Janet, Marian, Elaine

Janet Lumb talks to Sara later...

SARA: How did you join the Moral Lepers?

JANET: I ran into them on the street and they asked me to come to a practice and whether I'd be interested in joining the band. I came to the practice and I stayed. I really hadn't thought about joining them before although I had a lot of respect for them as musicians.

SARA: What was it like coming into a band that had been together for a long time?

JANET: I came in at a good time. A band is like a relationship. The first year and a half to two years are like a honeymoon and then you start to run into blocks. If you can get through them you can move into new levels and complexity. The Moral Lepers has had the best of both worlds in the sense that they were together for that period, took a break and reformed. They've been able to build on the past but they have the freshness of a new band. I was doing well, then about a month ago I went through a hard period for awhile. The social scene that I'm used to and that of the Lepers is quite different, both in terms of friends and the music that I've exposed myself to. I went through some alienation.

SARA: How is it different playing essentially rock music instead of the

music you were playing, with more of a folk influence?

JANET: When I joined I was really excited because I thought that there would be less structure to follow and I could be more creative because the music is so complex. Instead it seemed that if anything, I had to be tighter in what I played in order to follow. Now I'm able to let go more. I have yet to come to the band with a piece of music to start a melody line. I'm looking forward to being able to do that.

SARA: Is it different playing in the Lepers rather than a band oriented towards the women's community?

JANET: In the sense that the Moral Lepers are all feminists: no! But I'm playing for a different audience than I'm used to—more punks and in different places.

SARA: What kind of politics do you bring to music?

JANET: When I write songs they tend to be about the personal political process. The ways that individual women experience and change their lives.

SARA: Do you work for money outside the band?

JANET: I've been a childcare worker for eight years now. I'm losing my job because of the cutbacks in the new budget, so I'll have to do something else.



Barbara Pratt

JANET: "When I write songs, they tend to be about the personal, political process..."

influenced people. Look at that film that came out of there, *The Decline of Western Civilization*. All those bands are so stoned out and drunk that you couldn't hear a word that they were saying into the microphone.

SARA: Do you think that you could break into the commercial market?

RACHEL: I don't know. We do covers, we do other people's music, people recognize that music and they like that; we're not a bad dance band actually.

MARIAN: Our sound could be commercial though. I think we're not particularly marketable, as a band, which I'm glad about.

RACHEL: We get really tired of playing songs although everybody likes them. We start wanting to do something else and not do our covers and our schlocky songs, so that sort of prevents you from being able to fill a whole night, which is a real commercial trip, doing three sets, six nights a week.

MARIAN: We would want control over a record that we put out, and that's not okay in the commercial market.

ELAINE: The commercial market — are we talking about the Top Ten?

CONNIE: I'm not interested in that. I would prefer to do a record on a local alternative label and make that competitive with the commercial market, as opposed to going through the commercial market. That way, maybe ten years from now, all the small alternative labels will be right up there, be interesting, and have a large audience like major labels. *MO DA MU*, *Alternative Tentacles* and whoever would be right up there.

MARIAN: Or like *Gang of Four*, that managed to record on Warner

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**I saw a boy with a plastic gun
He was playing war to have some fun
He said: I'm only eight will they let me fight
When they drop the bomb will it be alright?**

—excerpt from *Plastic Gun*

Brothers and still have control over their material.

RACHEL: They're playing our record in England.

CONNIE: We're trying to get our record pressed again and released in England as a domestic release, as opposed to them importing it from us. One of the things that happens to bands sometimes that are as isolated as we are, is that people on the other side of the world hear their records by accident and they generate this following that's 10,000 miles away which is great. But at the same time we'd like to have a lot of local and Canadian support.

ELAINE: We're talking about doing a tour down the west coast next spring. A lot of people come to our gigs here, but you can only do that so long.

CONNIE: The music industry is so controlled by men. It's hard for a group of five women to function in that reality. We say that on one hand we'd like to support ourselves and make a living through our music, but at the same time we're not willing to compromise ourselves, to wear tight little dresses so that we could make more money.

MARIAN: What ever happened to the Gogos?

CONNIE: Look at the Slits. On their cover they take their clothes off and do mud wrestling.

RACHEL: We got our model for our last cover out of the graveyard, made of stone, a carbon-monoxide covered dead statue, that's fashion for you.

CONNIE: It's hard for us to make a dent in the music industry in the sense that we want to do things the way we want us to do it. So we cover ground slowly. We're extremely limited by our funds. We're not in a position where we can do a high quality recording, production and release, which we would like to do.

SARA: What would you ideally like to do?

CONNIE: I would like to see us make a sixteen track recording with

good graphics and good sound quality and press two or three thousand copies and distribute them in the States, Canada and Europe.

ELAINE: I think of the music industry as those humungous corporations who give you a contract and you have to put out ten albums whether you feel like it or not in five years. The only way that alternative stuff gets out in the major media is if you sign in blood, or if somebody somewhere sees that they're going to make some money off of radical stuff.

MARIAN: Maybe it's time for there to be more women's bands.

RACHEL: We've got to hang in there and try to be more and more creative. I think that we will definitely make our dent on the market, whatever that's worth. Meanwhile, I'm just doing things that I want to do.

CONNIE: Obviously in the future we'd love to have a record and have 20,000 copies out and if that needs to be distributed by a major label we'd love to have that kind of help, but we do want artistic control. But the way that the music industry is going right now with digital recordings — it's such high tech stuff that we aren't even in a position to know about that.

ELAINE: I don't know if I'd love it. As a band, some good things are happening for us, and if we stay together and keep doing things more attention is generated, but I think that we're obscure and that we're probably just going to be obscure in more places.

SARA: Getting back to this issue of high tech. There seem to be art forms based on a live audience that are a kind of counter to mass culture. As the technology gets more capital intensive, a lot of that may be excluded from recording, but that may, in turn, create more space for a 'live scene' precisely because the music is not available in recorded forms.

Punk, Dykes and Other Tykes

SARA: My perceptions are that the MORAL LEPERS have had a positive and fairly strong impact on the punk

scene and people who listen to alternative music, in terms of opening a real space for women musicians and women's political music. Do you agree?

ELAINE: We played in Victoria with the *Dead Kennedys*. It was a benefit for the Five and one of us heard from somebody who lived there that there was not one woman musician within the punk scene in Victoria. They liked us, we were playing with two local bands as well, but I noticed a lot of women right up front watching us play.

CONNIE: It's 1983 and people have been pogoing now for five years. Punk is alive and well but at the same time all those punks' girlfriends are a little tired by now of having their boyfriends slam-dancing back and forth while they sit at the sides to keep their bodies from getting bruised. It's a very violent male thing.

ELAINE: The music that we do reflects our lives; relaxation might not be the actual reflection of your life. That's what punk is about — that this is not a very relaxing time to be alive in the world, that things are really heavy and flipping out. To be sixteen in 1983 — it's a hard time to be a young person in the world. It's an emotional response to being alive now. We're as much involved in that kind of feeling and relationship to the world as we can be in doing what we do.

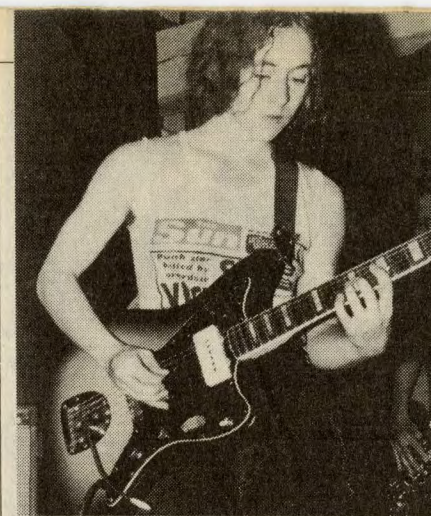
CONNIE: Music comes from a creative force, not out of being relaxed and having time to be creative. It's striving to express yourself and often times it comes out of the oppressed and minorities.

MARIAN: We've been some kind of a bridge between the punk and the women's movement to some extent. A lot of women started coming out to gigs to see us and rubbing shoulders with punks. There's really a diverse audience. We've had some gigs that have had every type of person imaginable there. It's nice to see punks and dykes and all these people coexist in the same room together and everything's fine. And they have a good time.

CONNIE: We're not trying to win punks over as an audience. If they listen to what we have to say and like our music and who we are, I think that's great. We've covered ground if we've succeeded in doing that, and in bringing different audiences together.

RACHEL: We used to be a lot

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Barbara Pratt

ELAINE: "I don't think a dictator would survive in this band..."

punkier ourselves. We still have a punky attitude, but our music is getting a lot more varied. It's getting more complex.

MARIAN: I think the great thing about punk is that people who could never play an instrument before could just get up on a stage and do basic 4/4 time; that's how I got started. Everybody else was doing it so I could do it too. As you play for longer and as you get better, your different musical backgrounds come out and you get more complex, more harmonic and melodic and change time signatures.

RACHEL: We don't have any stuff that's just one groove; we don't have any one-riff songs. Maybe we should have one.

MARIAN: The punk movement did help to launch us, combined with the women's movement.

SARA: Do you think that you've encouraged other women to play music?

CONNIE: Yes. We've had women walk up to us and say, "If they can do it, I can do it too", and two days later they're going down to the pawn shop and buying a bass or drum sticks.

MARIAN: There's a new all woman band that's started called the *Industrial Waste Banned*.

RACHEL: There's *Bolero Lava*.

CONNIE: I got a lot of my inspiration from seeing your band *The Visitors*, (Rachel, Marian and Annie). I didn't know anything about playing drums and I was inspired by seeing other women.

MARIAN: It's great to have that community of women musicians, to swap notes and support each other, that's what we need to build up a bit, it's sort of small.

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SARA: Do you work with women technical people?

CONNIE: We do, but we also work with men. We try to work with someone who we get along with and trust and who knows what they're doing, whether male or female. I'm more temperamentally inclined to work with women if they are qualified.

SARA: Are you trying to learn the sound technology that surrounds getting a record out or your music to the audience?

CONNIE: Being a sound technician is a very specialized field and I'm more concerned with being a better drummer.

ELAINE: I learned a lot through the process of recording our EP. Connie, Bonnie, Cece and I worked on producing and mixing it in the studio and there were both good and bad things about it. To make our sound better requires learning what's available in recording technology to create the effect that we want.

SARA: What kind of impact have you had on male musicians in terms of their perceptions of women as musicians?

ELAINE: Some men are threatened by women doing anything, and some think it's great; it varies. The male musicians I know respect our band and the amount of energy we put into it.

CONNIE: I've had a lot of support from male musicians. I know men drummers who are really excited about women playing drums.

MARIAN: Rachel and Conny have had a lot of influence because they play in other bands and with men, and they have had a lot of influence on their music.

CONNIE: One of the men in *Junco Run* has said that he'll never play in a band without women.

RACHEL: It's so unbalanced. It doesn't reflect the population of the world. These white male people under thirty on the stage time and time again, it just doesn't make sense — it's ridiculous. It doesn't reflect the reality of life.

ELAINE: It does in a certain sense. It depends on where you're looking. It's not the reality of my life.

RACHEL: It's changing. I was at a gig recently where there were six bands. Three of them had women musicians in them. Some of them were singers, but most of them were playing instruments.

SARA: What other local music scenes have you had a relationship

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with, in terms of working with both musicians and audiences?

CONNIE: We've played at a place called City Space several times, which is a privately run artists' space that presents local and out of town musicians and has some theatre happening. It's an alternative to either a commercial or political venue. In that place we play with all kinds of bands and for different people.

SARA: Your music lately seems more coherent, rhythmical and tighter. Do you feel that that's true?

RACHEL: Our song writing is getting better over the years.

MARIAN: If what you're trying to say is that we're more funky, I think that's true.

CONNIE: The band has been through a few ups and downs and basically the rhythm section has stayed together through thick and thin. Especially since the band has gotten back together as a new format, we've been writing more as a band as opposed to a person writing a song and presenting it.

ELAINE: We're more of an ensemble in our current form. It's not like you take a solo here and it's my turn to take a solo there. There's space given to everyone to do what they're doing.

MARIAN: We're getting away from the one person being the front person. I'm still doing much of the singing, but I'm not so much the "singer of the band".

CONNIE: We're not side musicians backing up a singer, we are a band of five people that all play an equal role. Marian's playing synthesizer now, so we're all playing instruments.

RACHEL: I'm singing as much as I used to, but I'm doing more back up vocals.

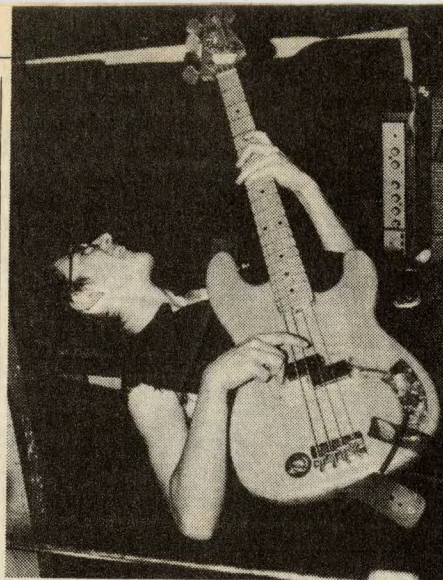
Working Together

SARA: How do you work as a collective?

ELAINE: It's like being in a daycare full of hungry children.

MARIAN: Some of the collectives I've worked in have been everybody hating each other and a lot of angst. We have problems, we have fights, but I think on the whole that we want to get on with it, and we really have to get on with it if we have a gig coming up.

CONNIE: We're at the point now where things are snowballing in the sense that we've put out one record and we've done this recording for a



RACHEL: "We don't have any one-riff songs..."
Barbara Pratt

compilation album of women's bands. We tried to produce it ourselves and none of us are experienced producers and we all have our own ideas on how we want to produce things, so that's a bit of a problem. It takes us a little longer than usual because of trying to please everybody and then we do it once and listen to it again and decide things aren't right and we have to do it again. Collectively things take longer, but in the long run it's a success.

RACHEL: It's much better to have everybody have their hand in it than have one moron who's a scapegoat and a frontperson. A lot of bands have this one human being who writes all the songs and all the lyrics and lays it down, produces it and then you shit on that person.

ELAINE: I don't think a dictator would survive in this band.

SARA: Your band has been together for about two years; that's a fairly long life for a band. Has the process of working together gotten smoother? If so, how?

CONNIE: We've had one member change; Janet joined six months ago.

RACHEL: I was getting into this thing for awhile, where we'd have some kind of issue happening, and my ego would get so attached to my particular side of the issue, it would become impossible for me to disassociate myself from the thing at hand. Like if we were trying to decide whether or not to do a gig or play a song in a set, it would be like "this is MY part in this and if it gets put down, it's ME, it's a blow to me." I've really been trying to get away from that lately, so I go, "Well this is the situation," and step back and go, "What is better

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for the group? Alright, I really like this song, I like singing it but I have to put aside what I really like and not add my personal existence onto it."

MARIAN: It's hard to replace an individual ego with a collective one. It's hard because its obviously a collection of personal egos that makes the Lepers good and if you assert yourself, you really believe something should happen and you're excited. Sometimes it can be really hard. I like to try and step back a bit.

CONNIE: That is a hard lesson that we've learned and are still learning every day.

SARA: Does each member bring a certain kind of influence with them?

ELAINE: Depending on what's happening with any particular person in the band at any given time, we throw in new influences. A lot of what I play sounds semi-classical to me. I thought that I had gotten rid of a lot of that but it came back, so it gets in.

SARA: Do you decide to go in a certain direction with your music, to study and develop?

CONNIE: No, we just jam on the different ideas and it moulds itself.

MARIAN: I think the idea of doing a live gig does actually influence us to a certain extent; there are times when we may think that a piece of music is a little too mellow. If we're going in that direction we'll think, "Well, people can't dance to this or people are really going to get bored with this."

ELAINE: Or we're gonna get bored. That's more where I'm at. There are certain things that I want to avoid, like being too commercial.

CONNIE: I'd say that we're definitely into reaching a wide audience, which is greater than just a women's audience. Maybe we lose some of the women's audience because we're a bit raucous. But I think they're getting used to us. Initially a lot of people didn't like us because of that.

MARIAN: We've broken ground through that. We've actually convinced some women that rock music isn't so terrible just by watching us. We're not the only ones that have done it but I think that we've helped.

SARA: Can you support yourselves playing music?

MARIAN: We can't support ourselves as a band.

CONNIE: We all work part-time or are on welfare and we're scavengers.

RACHEL: We eat from big gardens and garbage cans.
Sarah Diamond

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1983

FILM

Ms. Horatio Alger A False Sense of Optimism or Closure?

MARION HAYDEN PIRIE

Flashdance

director: Adrian Lyne
screenplay: Tom Hedley and Joe Esterhas
Paramount Pictures

WHEN FLASHDANCE WAS FIRST released in Canada and the United States this summer, it was described by some critics as an innocuous, largely unremarkable commercial film. However, its rather remarkable commercial success (grossing \$71.2 million dollars in 16 weeks) has sparked among film critics a renewed interest in its appeal. By the same token, social critics of popular culture might do well to take another look at the implications of its message.

The movie is about Alexandra Owens, an 18 year-old welder who works in a Pittsburgh steel mill by day and dances 'professionally' in a working class bar by night. Alex, as she prefers to be called, aspires to one day become a classical dancer with the Pittsburgh Repertory Dance Company. However, without the appropriate credentials and formal dance training, the realization of her dream seems unlikely. But, Alex does make it—to an audition, at least—and with the exuberant head wagging, handclapping and toe tapping of the Arts Council Adjudicators, we are left with little doubt but that Alex's ultimate dream will be fulfilled.

While Nick, Alex's lover/steel-mill boss (who has an unlikely 'in' with the Arts Council) sees to it that she is invited to audition, the film makes it very clear that Alex makes it to the top, not only on her own steam, but, more importantly, because she didn't "lose the dream". As strains of the theme song (which plays throughout the film) continually remind us — "when there's nothing but a slow blowin' dream that our fear seems to hide, we simply take our passion and make it happen, and we, too, can dance right through our life".

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Alex, unlike her friends, Jeannie and Ritchie, two other young aspiring entertainers, displays the requisite unrelenting and unflagging determination it takes to succeed in this world. Even despite such formidable odds as the untimely death of her mentor and close friend Hannah, a former dancer herself, Alex persists in her quest. Indeed *Flashdance* contains the newest version of the Horatio Alger formula that has continued to charm audiences since the character first appeared in novel form decades ago.

The commercial critics who are currently comparing *Flashdance* with *Staying Alive* single out their embodiments of the newest cultural aesthetic — "pumping iron" or body building. Jay Scott, critic for the *Globe & Mail* calls *Flashdance* "Rocky with a sex change" and *Staying Alive* — *Flashdance* in a

jockstrap." The most social or critical analysis of the film in the popular media has been made by feminists who claim that the movie is simply a juiced-up, high-tech, and inherently offensive Harlequin Romance. The only difference in the formula, it is argued, is that Alex 'fucks' rather than marries the boss (who later sees to it that an audition is granted). As with all Harlequins, feminists maintain, sexuality is once again depicted as the most instrumental mode of social ascent for women.

However, *Flashdance* masquerades as something more politically provocative than a thinly disguised Harlequin Romance. Nick's intervention on Alex's behalf merely affords a necessary concession to credibility in an otherwise ludicrous plot. *Flashdance* is an example of the newest genre among Hollywood films which purport to ad-

Alex and Nick 'flash' their pearlies in this retrograde romance



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COURTESY PARAMOUNT PICTURES

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ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK FROM THE MOTION PICTURE



What a Feeling! ... \$71.2 million in 16 weeks, and a number-one record to boot!

dress not only the appropriate modes of femininity and feminism, but the prospects for social and occupational mobility for youth in general under western world capitalism. In the latter instance, *Flashdance* is one of the most powerful expressions of liberal ideology in popular culture today. Furthermore, it is aimed at a target audience, the young adolescent set whose political socialization is just beginning to take shape.

As the dominant ideology in Canada and the United States, liberalism espouses among a number of its plaudits, the freedom of the individual, unfettered competition, and the notion that ours are meritocratic, open and classless societies. Accordingly, we come to blame ourselves and not the nature of social arrangements for our inability to achieve "the dream" so seemingly accessible to Alex Owens and the other heroines depicted in popular culture. It is by its success in generating acceptance of such contradictions as 'openness' and 'occupational segregation' as compatible dimensions in our

society, that Capitalism is able to reproduce itself. And, this selling of the liberal ideal depends very much upon the success with which revolutionary themes and alternative ideologies are depoliticized and/or absorbed by the dominant ideology.

There are two aspects of *Flashdance* which facilitate its ideological function in our society: 1) its supposed political neutrality as a form of mass culture; and 2) its co-optation of feminist idealism as a revolutionary theme.

Film as a de-politicized cultural form

The link between television programs and the perpetuation of commercial capitalism is much more readily detectable than that between commercial film and the commercial culture. It is often argued that the main function of television series (as with magazine articles, for example) is to 'deliver' the audience to the advertised products.

Commercial film, however, mas-

querades as a self-serving commercial enterprise with no apparent hidden agenda linking it to broader political and economic concerns. Films such as *Flashdance* do not pretend to 'construct' an audience for any purpose other than sheer entertainment. Accordingly, when we — the mass audience — view a film such as *Flashdance*, we do so in a less discriminating or reflective manner than we might adopt when making sense of advertisements. In an important sense, we dispense with the notion of *Caveat Emptor*, expropriating the task of reflection to the film critics themselves. Film criticism, however, functions largely as an auxiliary consumer report, commenting not upon the social or political, but rather the commercial or entertainment value of a film.

Nevertheless, most forms of the commercial culture will, however obliquely, register and perpetuate the contours of commercial capitalism. The financial success of the typical Hollywood film depends on its ability to engage the generalized experience — to mobilize the identification process — of large segments of audiences. Accordingly, those films which present an alternative view of society will tend to have less commercial appeal than the typical Hollywood film which taps the experiences (even 'wished-for' experiences) of an audience already entrapped by the ideological views of liberalism. In mirroring the *status quo*, particularly as they presume to represent the virtues of an open society, commercial films such as *Flashdance* play a powerful role in legitimating the current social order.

The co-optation of feminist idealism

Less than two decades ago, the major identification of women was within the family unit; her primary function was to reproduce and to nurture. A woman's relationship to society and her access to its major resources was accomplished largely through the way in which she managed her relationship with men. A fundamental goal of the Women's Liberation Movement was to challenge that identification through various modes of consciousness raising. Accordingly, the depiction of women asserting occupa-

tional and sexual autonomy has become the preferred cultural stereotype, or "role model" for young women today. Alex Owens very much fits the criteria for this stereotype.

Alex's sexual and occupational autonomy is expressed largely through her relationship with Nick, her boss and lover. She sleeps with Nick only when it suits her. In every romantic scene it is Alex and not Nick who takes the sexual initiative. Her sexually liberated attitude is expressed when Alex blithely comments to Nick's former wife that she "fucked his brains out" on their first date. In fact, Alex's sexual and occupational autonomy are significantly interconnected. In the scene depicting their first date, Nick finally fires Alex because she "doesn't believe in dating the boss," then asks her out for dinner. Alex, somewhat indifferent, accepts the date; proceeds to seduce an apparently ambivalent Nick later that evening and arrives for work on time the next morning (in blatant disregard of Nick's dismissal) while a sexually spent Nick languishes in her bed. Alex indeed exhibits all of the appropriate attributes of the cultural stereotype of the liberated woman. What is most compelling about the portraiture of Alex's sexuality, however, is that the romantic scenes between Nick and Alex pale considerably when contrasted to the electrifying sexually provocative dance sequences. When Alex begins to dance she (and by extension, we the audience) becomes completely consumed with the movement of her body — "When I close my eyes, I am rhythm." It is the depiction of Alex's narcissistic fetishization of her own body, rather than her supposed sexually liberated attitudes toward men, which most forcefully punctuates the theme of individualism running throughout the film.

Flashdance is of course not the first film to fuse (and confuse) sexual liberation with female liberation. But in purporting to challenge old patriarchal notions of the sexually passive, dependent woman, the film manages to interface, at the same time, with liberal ideology. The major theme in *Flashdance* is the notion that occupational mobility depends entirely upon the kind of independent will and energy (libidinal or otherwise) so provocatively expressed through the

characterization of Alex. In appearing to challenge other aspects of an oppressive social order, namely sexist views of women, *Flashdance* masquerades as a revolutionary, "forward looking" film. The problem with such characterizations as that of Alex is that they are understood as the real consequence of a serious political movement, and not as the vaunted ideal of a false meritocracy.

When political ideals proposed by groups opposing the dominant order become popularized and absorbed as mass entertainment, they tend to lose their revolutionary threat. We walk away from films such as *Flashdance*, *Fame*, and *Staying Alive* (all films embodying themes of young working class ascendance) not so much with a false sense of optimism, but with a false sense of closure. In the dramatization of the dilemma, battles are symbolically resolved for us. As an adjunct, the evangelical quality of the music in these films aid, not in inciting (as Marcuse might have argued) but in absorbing the affective energy of a mass audience which might otherwise direct such energy towards more politically useful ends. Ultimately, films like *Flashdance* function to deprive the mass audience of its propensity for critical reflection and political action.

Nowhere in the history of our culture has any revolutionary movement, including the Civil Rights Movement, been accorded such a wide currency by the media as has the Women's Liberation Movement. The mass production of the 'feminist stereotype' — the upwardly mobile, sexually liberated, high achieving woman — goes further in promoting the myth of meritocracy than the dominant ideology which such stereotypes presume to challenge. Because of the pervasiveness of commercial culture, and the power of certain of its forms in presenting a false picture of society, it becomes difficult for young adolescents (who like my daughter and her friends are about to see *Flashdance* for a third and fourth time) to maintain any critical conception of not only what is desirable, but more importantly, what is possible in our society today.

Marion Hayden Pirie is currently researching S/M imagery in advertising, record covers, etc. and is studying 'women in the media' at York University.

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Too Hot to Handle

Envisioning a Future for Feminist Action

JOYCE MASON

Born in Flames

Lizzie Borden
16 mm, 85 min, colour
distribution in Canada:
D.E.C. Films

IMAGINE FOR A MOMENT THAT you want to make a film about women and about their struggles, about how the political issues that women define seem always to be 'side-issues' in the political arena. Assume that you don't find the situation a simple one, that you understand that capitalism reinforces the sexual division of labour as well as the class divisions of labour and power. Remember all you know about political power, control and rhetoric — about broken campaign promises and revolutions betrayed. You want to tell a story and to rekindle the "passion for a desire to transform things".*

What better realm for tapping passion and desire than the realm of fantasy. And *Born in Flames* is fantasy. It is a richly layered narrative that grows out of feminist experience, in all its variations,

* All quotes not specifically cited in the context of scenes from the film are from a conversation with the filmmaker.

forms and contexts. The fantasy has many aspects but to begin I will name two: first that women confronting the very "ordinary" oppression women have been experiencing for decades, refuse to take it any longer and become armed fighters against the government, and second that women will unite across race and cultural lines in their effort to end oppression.

The setting of *Born in Flames* reflects the fact that the future is the most fruitful setting for our fantasies. In the future we can construct the ground for their realisation. The film takes on the quality of 'pure' and wild fantasy precisely because (like most of our fantasies) is so fundamentally grounded in the present — in our recognition of present conflicts and our attempts to envision solutions.

The film is set in the unspecified and (realistically speaking) hard-to-imagine future — ten years after a Socialist-Democratic cultural 'revolution' in the U.S. And as if this were not an outlandish enough premise for anyone to begin with, everything looks exactly the same. Cynical? Well political traditionalists will no doubt find it so, but anyone who has been

disillusioned with the "democratic system" or traditional left party politics is more likely to perceive an irreverent but ever hopeful humour. The cynicism is there of course, it is the weight of knowledge, experience and disillusionment. But it is always framed in energy and activity.

There are four groups of women represented in the film, reflecting various ideological/cultural positions within the women's community:

- A Women's Army, racially mixed, which sponsors rallies, demonstrations, and vigilante groups against rape and assault.

- A Black women's underground radio station, its roots in soul, gospel and reggae.

- A white women's underground radio station, its roots in punk and rock.

- A group of white female 'intellectuals', newspaper editors working with the Party to define the "correct" position on women's issues.

On the other end of the spectrum of characters are various representatives of the 'powers that be':

Isobel of Radio Regazza and Honey of Radio Phoenix spread the word on the pirate airwaves



- The government, in the form of president, mayor and F.B.I. and 'Party' members.

- The mainstream media, represented by newscasters and talk show hosts.

The Messages of the Media

Informational and surveillance media are the central devices of the film, serving both to move the narrative forward and representing the processes of control and communication. From the opening sequences of the film we are introduced to the form of *Born in Flames*: overlapping 'realities' and their representation/expression.

We begin with a self-congratulatory television commentary on the 10th anniversary of the Social-democratic revolution then cut to the voice of Isabel on the underground *Radio Regazza* introducing with evident distaste the government commissioned 'new-wave culture' theme-song for the 10th anniversary celebrations entitled "We are Born in Flames" and the sound track laps over into the following 'real life footage' of cashiers in supermarkets and office clerical workers. Women. Everything looks the same.

Adelaide Norris, "leader of the Women's Army" is introduced to us by means of an F.B.I. surveillance report — miscellaneous facts, background slides of family photographs, 'contacts' — both political and social and of course conclusions: "The Women's Army is dominated by Blacks and lesbians." The voice of the F.B.I. overlapping again into Adelaide sitting at a kitchen table with other women talking about how they can keep their local daycare centre open, in the face of government cut-backs.

This overlapping structure of the film is a complex interweaving of music, voice and images. The film works on many levels concurrently. Theoretical political discussions may overlap from their own scene into images of 'grass roots' struggles, demonstrations, or the mundane activities of daily life and on the audio track into music or conversation. Televised political speeches may follow ironically on the heels of the expression of a particular political goal, frustration or dissatisfaction, or the dramatised reality of a woman

being the first laid off on a construction site.

The role of the mainstream media in interpreting and diminishing voices of political opposition is depicted with power. The media itself is juxtaposed with 'direct representations' of the women whose lives form the central narrative of the film. We often see people watching the news, the political speeches on television or 'showing' an article in the party paper to their friends. From rolling eyeballs to more verbal expressions of disagreement, the film counters the idea that the people are passive consumers of information.

In this context it is not surprising that the focus for the terrorist activities of the Women's Army becomes the struggle for control of the media. Now there's a fantasy most of us can call our own!

The strategies of the women in the film are diverse and of course include the underground radio stations and eventually, even the party newspaper and the armed interruption of the national broadcast of a presidential speech which is replaced by a message from the Women's Army.

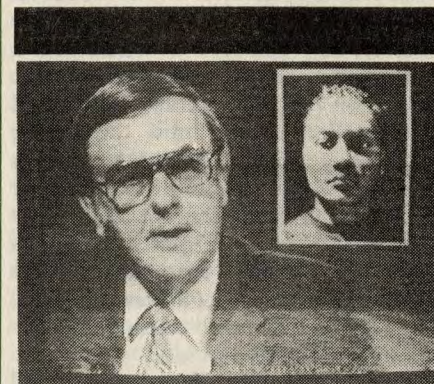
There are so many sequences of purely delightful humour in the film that I can only say EVERYONE MUST SEE THIS FILM for themselves. But to give you a taste, I will here recount two of my favourites.

- After a demonstration for women's rights Adelaide Norris (Jeanne Satterfield) is talking to Zella Wylie (Flo Kennedy) about her frustration, "The thing was, that these 3,000 women were all so separate. It wasn't even unified." And Zella counters with her inimitable brand of anarchistic optimism: "Everyone is always talking about how we need unity. How we all have to be united by a single cause. Well, I don't know...If you were the government and the army and the educational system and so on — and you had a gun — what would you rather see coming through that door? One lion unified? or 500 mice? Now my theory is that 500 mice can do a lot of damage."

- An F.B.I. briefing session in which one agent attempts to explain to the other, the organisational structure of the Women's Army. (The F.B.I. agents are played with perfect understatement by Ron Vawter and



Zella Wylie rolls her eyes as the mayor speechifies on the 'cultural revolution'



Newscaster announces the death of Adelaide Norris as a suicide



Women's Army guerillas hold up the control room of CBS...



...and Zella Wylie interrupts the president's address to denounce Adelaide's murder

courtesy of Lizzie Borden

John Coplans.) One man is standing by his flip-chart with magic marker in hand while the other studiously sits behind a desk taking notes and asking questions. A large circle is drawn and then smaller circles are traced around the circumference. "The Women's Army is made up of small cells, all around the city. The cells are set up through indoctrination meetings." (We have the image of women talking casually in a living room.) "How do they choose a leader?" the man at the desk wants to know. "Well, we're not quite sure how they interconnect. But each group chooses a leader on a rotating basis [small arrow heads are drawn on the circumference of each of the smaller circles] and then these leaders get together from time to time and this is the problem: we're never sure who is in charge at any given time." Witness the laughter of anyone who has ever lived through the trials and tribulations of collective process. Ah, the subversive nature of the feminist collective model!

But the film is of course not all laughs, or even ironic chuckles. It is after all, the murder of Adelaide Norris which provides the catalyst for the various women represented in the film to come together in their struggle against oppression. And yet, somehow the cacophony of women's voices in this film do seem to ultimately blend into a wild and rousing anthem without giving up their origins or their individual anger. The hopefulness of the film is in its portrayal of insistent activity as well as in its spoken lines.

Writing the Truths

The writing for *Born in Flames* is quite simply one of the most intelligent and lively examples of writing for film that I have seen. There is a complex layering of 'voices' and images that evokes the experience of day to day life — perhaps more specifically the lives of socially, culturally and politically active women. The humour of scripted scenes is primarily ironic, so 'perfect', so recognizable, that the audience is more likely to squeal with delight than break into a hearty guffaw.

But in speaking of writing for film, I'm not simply referring to dialogue. The process of 'writing' this film took place at the editing table, in the conversations and events which occurred during filming, and in the collabor-

ation between Borden and the people who appear on the screen.

The reasons for the complexity of the film are partly economic, partly aesthetic, and partly personal. As Borden explains, she has a lot of friends sitting on scripts for years trying to raise the money to make them and so she didn't want to work her way through an entire script and then have to wait for years to shoot it. She decided to start with scenes that she knew she wanted, then work with



The Women's Army Wants You!

them on the editing table and build. She had received a grant of \$3,000 ("which is about a minute and a half") and went on from there, funding the work mainly on money she earned working as an editor on other people's films. About two years into production she received another grant, this time for \$15,000 and was able to film the bulk of the narrative at this point. Then it was back to the editing room and the 'writing' process.

Furthermore, Borden claims that she felt more sure of herself as an editor than as a director at this point and so she wanted to draw on that strength while developing her confidence and abilities as a director. And so she worked towards making a film that would be "unified by an aesthetic of cutting...finding a rhythm to bring together different images."

"I didn't want to make a film that wasn't going to change my life." She didn't want to make a film which was what she already knew, that would reflect only her own social, political or intellectual background. The making — 'writing' — of the film was "inductive...starting from point A and evolving". Feeling restricted by the 'flattened out' sense of isolation and fragmentation of most progressive groupings, Borden wanted to re-find an energy. She wanted

"to somehow change myself", not by inward turning self-examination but actively, "by exchange with the outside, I knew that my language would have to change". By changing one's language one is capable of saying new things.

These insights into the economic, aesthetic and personal background of *Born in Flames* are separated into the convention of paragraphs. However, they are inextricably intertwined. Content, form and context are, at their most powerful, inseparable. And this is a good part of the power of this film.

Structuring a Dialectic of Struggle

Throughout *Born in Flames* the struggle between the Women's Army and the government builds and escalates. Each step forward is met with reprisal. They think of arming themselves; Adelaide is murdered. They hold hostage the TV network to interrupt a broadcast with their own message; Zella is arrested and their underground radio stations are bombed. They steal trucks, the two stations merge (Radio Phoenix/Regazza) and are on the move...and finally they sabotage the transmission tower atop the World Trade Tower (so that during the period of temporary repairs they will be able to lock into national broadcasts); and here the film ends with the open-end of the process of struggle.

One woman in the film said that we have to take control of the media, the language. Even if only for a moment we must take on the responsibility for defining ourselves. And although we all know that a single moment is never enough, the dialectic of struggle has been established and the guerilla war is escalating. Rather than the end, the explosion in the final frame of the film becomes another phase in the struggle for power.

"Only for a minute? Surely we need more than a minute of air time," I said. "Yes, but once it's done it's always there. It's a possibility."

Lizzie Borden is an artist/art critic turned filmmaker. Her previous film *Re-grouping* dealt with feminist consciousness raising groups. *Born in Flames* was five years in the making. We hope that we won't have to wait so long to see the next one.

—Joyce Mason

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The Roots of Rage

Scholarship that is Unabashedly Anti-Imperialist

CLIFTON JOSEPH

A Different Hunger

Writings on

Black Resistance

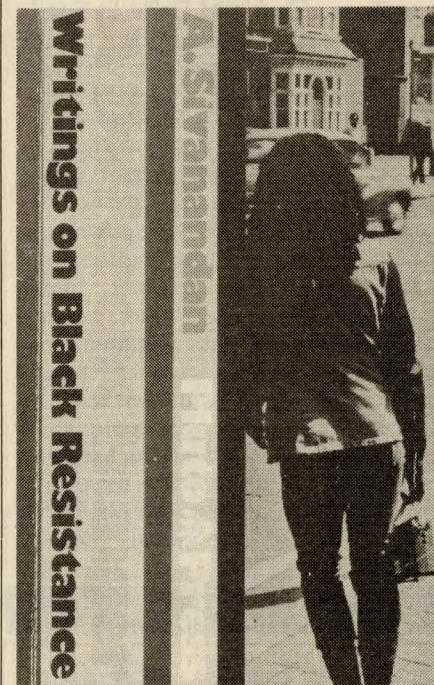
by A Sivanandan

(Pluto Press Limited,
London, England, 1982)

"A DIFFERENT HUNGER" IS A compilation of essays on Black Resistance in Britain that were written by Sivanandan and published over the past decade in *Race Today* and *Race and Class* (two of the main Black British journals). The book is a timely and probing/analytical investigation into the roots of Black rage that dramatically flared up in the flames of the riots in Brixton, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham and many other British cities in the sweltering summer of 1981. Sivanandan combines a panoramic cross-section of Black (African, Asian and Afro-Caribbean) life and history in Britain, with lyrical essays on international Black figures the likes of Angela Davis, Jonathan Jackson, James Baldwin, Paul Robeson, and a well-presented analysis of Black people's fight against racism and discrimination in all areas of British life.

Sivanandan identifies the chronic shortage of labour in the period after World War II as the beginnings of significant Black immigration from the colonies to Britain. He traces the patterns of racism that confronted them in housing, in education, in social agencies and in employment where, "Asians were generally employed in factories, foundries and textile mills while recruitment of Afro-Caribbeans was concentrated in the service industries (transport, health and hotels)". He also carefully explains the movement of Black resistance in its first manifestations in housing, cultural/social and welfare organisations and highlights the emerging Afro-Asian unity based on a common fight against British racism and colonialism.

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consequent rise of white supremacist neo-fascist groups across London. Black resistance became more militant in this period and the government responded by restricting immigration with the 1962 *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*. They further tightened the screws in 1968 by making it almost impossible for anyone other than a skilled or professional worker to qualify for immigration. By this time England was augmenting its workforce with migrant workers from the poorer southern European

countries. Blacks who had already entered the country could still become citizens. But with the 1971 Immigration Act, which provided for the issuing of permits to Black workers specifying when, where, and for how long they would work in the country, the government had, in effect, made the citizen of British colonies into a migrant worker, stemming the tide of Black emigration from the colonies.

Clamping down on immigration did not placate Black demands for fair treatment though and, according to Sivanandan, the protests became more radical. Protesting against police brutality and their reluctance to defend Blacks against the racial violence of white-supremacist organisations, the *Black Panther Movement* stated in their hand-out on October 3, 1968 that, "unless something is done to ensure the protection of our people, we will have no alternative but to rise to their defense. And once we are driven to that position, Detroit and Newark will inevitably become part of the British scene." Again the government attempted to mute, rather than seriously consider, Black protest. This time it was through a complicated Race Relations industry and by swamping certain organisations with money in the hopes of neutralising them. The government's main agencies for this were the *Race Relations Act* (1968), the *Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council* (1962), the *Community Relations Commission* and the *Race Relations Board*. Sivanandan says of the Board that it has "failed for the masses of Blacks. But it succeeded in what the state meant it to do: to justify the ways of the state to local and sectional interests — and to create in the process a class of coloured collaborators who in time justify the ways of the state to the Blacks."

The Thatcher government has continued its attack on the Black community beyond this clampdown on Black

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immigration by endorsing recommendations calling for a "system of internal control of immigration", including increased surveillance of Blacks and improvement of existing "arrangements to help those who are really anxious to leave this country". In what Sivanandan characterises as a move designed to thwart black and white working class unity, the government has cynically concluded that the way to improve race relations in Britain is through a systematic control of the Black community including tougher restrictions against the immigration of dependents and a coercive and thinly disguised programme of induced repatriation.

In forceful, sometimes poetic prose, Sivanandan points again and again to the British state's collaboration with various agencies, including unions, in thwarting Black people's efforts to get basic rights as citizens. He makes it clear that Blacks have constantly resisted British racism and credits the 'second generation' ("black youths condemned by racism and then put upon by the police") as the ones who sustained the opposition to the excesses of the law after an earlier generation of West Indian radicals who were co-opted into the system. These are the youths who were born in England but, victims of high unemployment, have never known work and are being constantly harassed by the police with the infamous "Sus" law (a section of the 19th century vagrancy law that allows for arrest "on suspicion" — loitering with intent to commit a crime). It is in these youths that Sivanandan sees a potential new militancy, "... these are youngsters who will not have known any experience but the British and it threatens to be akin to that of Blacks in

America. It is they who will more closely approximate 'the colony within the mother country' status of their American counterparts. And it is they who will take up the same solutions. They are here and now and will take what British society owes them and will not give".

Sivanandan is thorough in his chronicling of the development of Black resistance to the racism of British society but, in this collection, he does not rest there. He extends his analysis to Third World and anti-imperialist struggles. In "Black Power: The Politics of Existence" he concludes that "what the Black Power movements in Britain, America and comparable movements in the Third World indicate is the end to white hegemony."

Variations on the Theme of Capitalism/Imperialism

In "Race, Class and Caste in South Africa" he wades through the complex issues of apartheid and comes out at variance with orthodox Marxist interpretation that maintains that the struggle in South Africa is a class struggle to be waged by the black and white working class. As Sivanandan sees it, "the racist ideology of South Africa is an explicit, systematic, holistic ideology of racial superiority — so explicit that it makes clear that the white working class can only maintain its standard of living on the basis of a black underclass, so systematic as to guarantee that the white working class will continue to remain a race for itself, so holistic as to ensure that the colour line is the power line is the poverty line. South Africa shows up as an exceptional capitalist

formation in which race is class and class race — and the race struggle is the class struggle". In "Imperialism in the Silicon Age" he traces the history of the movement of labour from Third World nations to the capitalist western countries and identifies the development of technology, especially the advent of the silicon chip, as one of the major catalysts that has brought about the present situation wherein capital moves to where the labour is in the Third World.

In this new variant on the theme of imperialism, distinctions are even made between Third World nations: the oil-producing countries at the top, followed by the "newly industrialising" countries and then the "underdeveloped countries proper" again at the bottom of the heap. The consequences to the countries in the latter category are startling, leaving gaping holes in their economies. The oil-rich Gulf states for instance, have distorted the labour structure of the countries of South Asia. Using the example of Sri Lanka, Sivanandan states that "Moratuwa, a coastal town in Sri Lanka, once boasted some of the finest carpenters in the world. Today there are none — they are all in Kuwait or in Muscat or Abu Dhabi. And there are no welders, masons, electricians, plumbers, mechanics — all gone. And the doctors, teachers, engineers — they have been long gone — in the first wave of post-war immigration to Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia, in the second to Nigeria, Zambia, Ghana. Today Sri Lanka, which had the first free health service in the Third World and some of the finest physicians and surgeons, imports its doctors from Marcos' Phillipines." With these developments have also come more repressive regimes, holding their populations ransom to foreign interests, and the concomitant resistance against this tyranny manifest in "mass movements with national and revolutionary components — sometimes religious, sometimes secular, often both, but always against the repressive political state and its imperial backers."

The essays contained in *A Different Hunger* have firmly established Sivanandan in the wave of scholarship that is unabashedly anti-imperialist.

Clifton Joseph is a poet and writer living in Toronto. An earlier version of this review appeared in *Contrast*, a Black community newspaper.

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Quick Radicle of Green To See and Overstand the Voice

EDWARD BRAITHWAITE

Winter Epigrams &

Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal
in Defense of Claudia

Dionne Brand
Williams-Wallace International
(Toronto) \$5.95

In this text 'W' refers to *Winter Epigrams*; 'E' to *Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal*; the numbers refer to the poet's numbered epigram.

I

Dionne Brand's Winter Epigrams

Dionne Brand, this sister, Toronto out of Trinidad, carries her verse with the clear sharp relaxed tension of Sistren and for much the same reasons: poor, hungry, cold, exile inhabit the verses with a warm feminine all-embracing sense of womb: of hope, that is, and home and him in all his glaces. Her fourth book of poems, *Winter Epigrams & Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia** has recently (March 1983) been published by Williams-Wallace International of Toronto; and with it we can at last begin, with some confidence, to see and overstand what the voice of the Caribbean woman poet is telling us, doing for us. How the line of that tradition begins to reveal itself from Nanny through the fias of all those slave revolts to the 30s to the flagwomen of so many carnivals to Miss Lou, to Pandora Gomez. And Dionne, perhaps because she is our first major exile female poet (sorry about all those qualifications) helps us to make a start.

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the epigram form helps too; getting her (and iani) closer to the nerve, to the bone, to the clear wide integrated circuits of her meaning; circuits of blood, that is, not stereo. And what else, what more a fitting form, we ask at the 'end' of the reading, for exile, for loneliness, for such bleak loveliness, the winter of the IIIWorld's sense of present discontents and that quick radicle of green from which the poems spring . . .

WINTER EPIGRAMS
&
EPIGRAMS TO ERNESTO CARDENAL
IN DEFENSE OF CLAUDIA

Dionne Brand

II

Winter Poems

we begin in autumn, in early September in fact, with death coming down from the North; the world of white (re)-asserting itself in the city:

1
A white boy with a dead voice
sings about autumn.
who knows what he means!

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2
no one notices the tree in the front yard
of the next apartment building
is dead, again

3
ten months in the cold
waiting
I have forgotten, for what!

this is where McKay was in 1925, in
New York, with, for him too, the
winter coming down. Forgetting he
looked (back) home. Dionne looks
out her tight apartment window in
Toronto:

they think it's pretty
this falling of leaves.
something is dying!
(W4)

every september, about the first week
a smell of infirmity clasps the air,
it is a warm lake like an old hand
trying to calm a cold city.
(W6)

and ?pretty soon it is her ark against
the arctic:

cold is cold is
cold is cold is
not skiing
or any other foolhardiness in snow.
(W8)

and we find her, trying to keep warm
heart, warm hope, warm mind, warm
friendship, at a Harbourfront poetry
reading; with others, too, trying to
say no to snow:

a coloured boat
sailed on a frozen lake
at Harbourfront
two northern poets, thankfully rescued
by this trip to Toronto, read
about distant grass
about arctic plains
who wants to see, who wants to listen!
(W7)

already the voice establishing itself within the enigmatic diary and the first 'cold lyric' follows:

I give you these epigrams, Toronto, these winter fragments these stark white papers because you mothered me because you held me with a distance that I expected, here, my mittens, here, my frozen body, because you gave me nothing more and i took nothing less, i give you winter epigrams because you are a liar, there is no other season here (W9)

but the theme of exile, we understand from the start, isn't going to be conventionally rootless, conventionally protest, conventionally shivering. Poet & place understand each other; each ijs own space; each at ijs learning distance. So she is *here*: poet, yes; and vulnerable woman:

I am getting old i know. my skin doesn't jump any more i am not young and in the company of people; i am old and in the company of shadows. things pass in the corners of my eyes and i don't catch them. what more proof do you want, look! i am writing epigrams (W10)

form and 'condition' meshing

winters should be answered in curt, no-nonsense phrases, don't encourage them to linger. (W11)

so she goes, this young woman of the IIIWorld tropics, to the winter discos "where you get to dance fast/and someone embraces you" (W12) or to the bookstore where "I can buy books/which i do not read and cannot afford/and make plans for them to/carry me through my depression..." (W19); or she takes a trip out of town but the click remains locked and she is licked within the winter solstice:

I've never been to the far north/cold, just went as far as Sudbury, all that was there was the skull of the earth.

a granite mask so terrible even the wind passed hurriedly. the skull of the earth I tell you, stoney, sockets, people hacked its dry copper flesh. I've heard of bears and wolves but that skull was all i saw. it was all I saw I tell you... (W18)

and as you would expect, at this heart of the ice, the icicle act, the insidious implosion:

the superintendent dug up the plants again, each june she plants them each september she digs them up just as they're blooming, this business of dying so often and so soon is getting to me (W23)

but watch now, at the same time, from the very bottom of the pit, the lovely handled anti-line:

It was not right to say her face was ruined by alcohol and rooming houses, it was still there, hanging on to her cracking itself to let out a heavy tongue and a voice (if you could call it that). her eyes opened not out of any real interest, not to see where she was going, but out of some remembered courtesy, something tumbled out of her mouth a Black woman walked by, one who could not keep a secret... (W27)

for it keeps closing in: rape, pornography, a man in a window showing her his penis (W46, 48, 51); where the green; where the love?

If one more peson I meet in an elevator in july says to me 'Is it hot enough for you?' or when standing, cold, at a car stop in november, 'How could you leave your lovely sunny country...' (W26)

I can wear dirty clothes under my coat now, be who I am in my room, on the street. perhaps there'll be an accident though. (W13)

it's too cold to go outside, i hope there won't be a fire. (W15)

I've found out staying indoors makes you horny, perhaps winter is for writing love poems. (W16)

and love, in all its various guises, it's remarch of voices, is what these poems (in addition to their major ojer themes, connected, disconnected) are 'about'. And no, not turtle dove; not even Russe/Zhivago love. But something that a sister comes to understand from as I say the Hill Queen Nanny, the rebels at Montego Bay, and those her mothers of the Middle Passage; from Caribbean daughter who does not (yet) forget to change her underwear... (W13)

III

Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia

the force-fields here are complex. Cardenal — he was the one in line on TV when the Pope visited Nicaragua; the revolutionary priest taking off his beret and kneeling to kiss the ring with the Pope wagging his finger at him. One of the finest poets of Our America, in *Apocalypse and other poems* (trans. 1977), Ernesto, alive to the blandishments of Claudia, the Cocoa-Cola girl, one of the problems of Our America, wrote

They told me you were in love with another man and [so] I went off to my room and I wrote that article against the government that landed me in jail.

(quoted in McTair's Introduction)

and Dionne picks this up; becoming herself Claudia, taking note of that male arrogance against the 'other', herself so different from that Claudia, yet sharing in the common gender, the oppression, and at last the love: for in the end the Revolution cannot be only politics, but heart & whole: from which the heal itself may one day come. But before that, Ernesto, too, must understand that

Often... little girls are quite desperate. (E11)

and

How do I know that this is love and not legitimation of capitalist relations of production in advanced patriarchy? (E12)

and

so we spent hours and hours learning Marx, so we picketed embassies and stood at rallies, so it's been 13 years agitating for the liberation of Africa, so they still think, I should be in charge of the refreshments. (E14)

and

I can't speak for girls of the bourgeoisie, But girls like me can't wait for poems and men's hearts. (E16)

and

Beauty for now, is a hot meal or a cold meal or any meal at all. (E20)

and, in direct response to Cardenal's poem:

so I'm the only thing you care about? well what about the incursions into Angola, what about the cia in Jamaica, what about El Salvador, what about the multi-national paramilitaries in South Africa, and what do you mean by 'thing' anyway? (E21)

and

If you don't mind can I just sit here today? can I not be amusing please? (E22)

so

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Stephanie Martin

Dionne Brand: "In Resolute Bay / they sing better than I..."

Dear Ernesto, I have terrible problems convincing people that these are love poems. Apparently I am not allowed to love more than a single person at a time. Can I not love anyone but you? signed, 'Desperate'. (E27)

but she can speak like that, has earned the right to speak like that, because the same way she knows her place as woman, she knows her place as revolutionary, as IIIWorld 20th century person & persona:

when I saw the guerrillas march into Harrare tears came to my eyes when I saw their feet, a few had shoes and many were bare when I saw their clothes, almost none were in uniform. the vanquished were well dressed. (E23)

Carbines instead of M16s manure explosives instead of cluster bombs self criticism instead of orders baskets full of sulphur instead of washing. (E24)

That is how we took Algiers and Ho Chi Minh city and Muputo and Harrare and Managua and Havana and St Georges and Luanda and Da Dang and Tet and Guinea and... (E25)

I wanted to be there. (E26)

for such a person/poet, as for Cardenal, there can be no separation: woman from her senses, artist from her life, politics from heart

cow's hide or drum don't tell me it makes no difference to my singing, I do not think that histories are so plain, so clumsy and so temporal... I want to write as many poems as Pablo Neruda to have 'pared my fingers to the quick' like his, to duck and run like hell from numbing chants. (E34)

these are the Ars Poetica poems of the collection; like (111): "on being told that being Black is being bitter" — the

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very heart, not so, of so many of our fruitless Caribbean post-Prospero debates

give up the bitterness
he told my young friend/poet
give it up and you will be beautiful.
after all these years and after all these words
it is not simply a part of us anymore
it is not something that you can take away
as if we held it for safekeeping,
it is not a treasure, not a sweet,
it is something hot in the hand, a piece of red coal,
it is an electric fence, touched...

it is the generation that grew up and died with Walter Rodney, knowing that it will have to go in & go through with it over & over again

it is not separate, different,
it is all of us, mixed up in our skins,
welded to our bones
and it cannot be thrown away
not after all these years, after all these words
we don't have a hold on it
it has a hold on us,
to give it up means that someone dies,
you, or my young poet friend...

'so be careful,' she says

when you say give up
the bitterness.
let him stand in the light for a moment
let him say his few words, let him breathe
and thank whoever you pray to
that he isn't standing on a dark street
with a brick,
waiting for you.
(E35)

and so we find her in Managua
("Managua in the evening sky"...
memorious and red" (E39); and in St
Georges...

there are hills, I hear,
to make me tired
and there is work, I know,
to make me thinner.
(E38)

the carefully tuned 'I hear' balanced
against 'I know' is part of the careful
craft of these epigrams: a sense of
verse & line present in all her books of
poems; as with this very Caribbean
woman in Transkei:

you can't say that there's rationing here
you can't complain about the meat
shortage
we have a good democratic system here
in Transkei
you can't say there is only so much milk
or so much butter
you can't bad-talk food on this bantustan
you can't put goat-mouth on it just like
that.
If you don't have a cow you can't
say there's no butter.
(E37)

IV

But always (back in Toronto) there is
still the 'no end', the 'half-home',
leading to the not unexpected negative
explosion, the poem coils in into itself
to make its meaning:

The night smells of rotten fruit.
I never noticed before
the cicala's deliberate tune,
something about it frightens me
as always,
as when hallucinating with a fever
I saw the mother of the almond tree
shadow me in my hot bed.
say say stay, say go say!
The night decays with fruit
dense with black arrangements
(E41)

McKay dreamed back to warm
deciduous Jamaica. Dionne, so much
more — and so much less — the exile
— confronts with household mask:

I've arranged my apartment
so it looks as if I'm not here
I've put up bamboo blinds
I've strung ever green hederia helix
across my kitchen window
I've bought three mexican blankets
to put on the walls...
If only I could get York Borough to
pass a city ordinance authorizing
the planting of Palm trees along
Raglan Avenue...
(W37)

and

Two things I will not buy
in this city,
mangoes and poinsettia
I must keep a little self respect
(W53)

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seen? and at the extreme perhaps of
vulnerability

Spring?
I wait and wait and wait;
peer at shrubs,
the neighbours don't know what to make
of this crazy Black woman
rooting in their gardens
looking for green leaves;
in only march at that.
(W33)

and it can she knows get to you and
lonely lonely is the word for it as in

shall I do it, then,
now, here,
a riddle for februarys,
shall I,
here, under this mexican blanket
clutching my dictionary (Vol.II the
shorter
Oxford Marl-Z),
Shall I do it before falling asleep
before the summer comes
before seeing the Chicago Art Ensemble
again...

like

maybe if Betty Carter never sang,
or Roscoe Mitchell never touched a
saxophone...

but Betty sang like Billie before her
and Bessie and Roscoe Mitchell burns
it on from all those ancient tranes; and
so these names are not commercial
shopping lists, but ikons: they mean
and they protect — like all the other
names within this poem. So that
within the IIIWorld circle of their fire,
the voice recovers, eremite & wry:
apocalypse too kaiso for utter ruin...

losing my life like that though,
mislaying the damn thing,
and right in the middle of winter,
me!
and it gone
flown
shall I chew the red berries
which I collected before the freeze.
(W45)

V

It is this stubbornness which reaches
Spring, which is the spring round

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which the poems curl & curve to
Cardenal again & Claudia but
Claudia at last that Cardenal must
understand in all her equal hope &
fear & reason: woman, now defined,
of isle & exile, art & heart & politics.

Claudia dreams birthday cakes
and mauve bougainvillea
Claudia dreams high heeled shoes
orchid bouquets, french perfume,
Sel Duncan Dress band,
the Hilton hotel pool, rum and coke,
commercial of the 'free' world
and men civilised by white shirts.
(E48)

Yet a woman is always alone,
a case of mistaken identity...
(E49)

or, less unmistakably

you say you want me to...
to what?
no I can't tap dance
at the International Women's Day rally.
(E47)

or to show that there's no hard feel-
ings either way: that even Africa doan
mek it so; (even though, that is, she's
'a Toronto Black poet'): this un-
Magnificat:

his name meant ruler, king in Yoruba
or god or something...
and even though I was an atheist
and a socialist, I went with him,
not holding his name against him,
liking it because it wasn't
george or harold — slave names! I spat—
what a love! this Yoruba name:
Olu fisoye Ojo Ajolabi!
beautiful for introductions and greetings
venerable and original,
grandiose and lyrical as mother earth...
a name like adire cloth
a name like asoke weave
Until he said: 'the poor want to be poor,
nothing's holding them back, they're just
lazy.'

then as serf of his majestic name and
tradition
of beaten gold,
as serfs will, I shouted at him:
colonised lackey! comprador! traitor!
adire cloth turn to shreds!
death of a closet monarchist! (served me
right)
beautiful appellation of contradictions!
I could not live with him
even though he would have paid the
rent,
and, well, it was never personal anyway.
(E45)

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it is this woman: person: poet: this
other sister Claudia: coming from all
those years, from all those journeys,
winter singings, that Cardenal must
come to deal with, deals with
Cardenal, until the equal is achieved,
until the one & one is one is recog-
nized; as in *Ars Hominis/the manly
arts*:

Since you've left me no descriptions
having used them all to describe me
or someone else I hardly recognize
I have no way of telling you
how long and wonderful your legs were;
since you convetously hoarded all the
words
such as 'slender' and 'sensuous' and
'like a
young gazelle'
I have no way of letting you know
that I loved how you stood and how you
walked...
(E30)

and as the negatives are worked with,
worked through, like the cold, like the
winter, like the snow, like Toronto,
like exile, like massa day done...

then, when at last she can not simply
say but sing that heart need not be half
& half but home; that if one place be
prison, the world that she inherits —
no — the world she earns — is not is
not but is — that then and only then
within these winter epigrams — the
green begins

Cardenal, the truth is that
even though you are not a country
or my grandmother
or coconut ice cream
or Marquez' Autumn of the Patriarch
or Sarah Vaughan
or cuban music
or brazillian movies
or Kurosawa
or C.L.R.'s *Black Jacobins*
or Angela
or Guayguayare
I love you...
(E54)

and with that quiet even handed tone
which is so much the poem

here!
take these epigrams, Toronto,
I stole them from Ernesto Cardenal,
he deserves a better thief
but you deserve these epigrams
(W22)

Edward Brathwaite is an internationally
renowned poet, published by *Oxford
University Press* and teaching at the
University of the West Indies.

FUSE

LETTERS, Continued from page 135

How clever of you to invoke, in at-
titude and style, that most successful of
all proofs of Jewish malevolence, *The
Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*
(a tract that was written by another
anonymous group and attributed to the
non-existent elders of the Jewish com-
munity). One really had to go back and
check sections entitled, "We Shall End
Liberty" and "Monopoly Capital" to
make sure that you hadn't lifted straight
from them! Even Mr. Henry Ford had
said, in one introduction to *The Pro-
tocols*, "The only statement I care to
make about *The Protocols* is that they
fit in with what is going on."

This is the kind of thinking that
makes movements, by golly.

To the Managing Editor:

I have written the above letter in
protest of the 'ad' that appeared on the
inside front cover of the fall issue of
FUSE, which you informed me was
written by Clive Robertson.

Nobody has ever heard of this
Coalition (The Committee...) or of its
work, nor could anyone confirm its
existence to me.

The ad is reminiscent of old right-
wing tracts whose styles try to suggest
logical links where none exist. The
text contains only a list of would-be
and ill-presented grievances that, on
their own, do not make an effective
case against "The Capitalists". These
grievances or 'facts' depend instead on
insidious, anti-semitic punchlines for
their editorial direction or tone.

The whole piece deserved the
editors slash, but it's his last line: "In
fact you could say that we and our
intercorporate friends control the
economy." with its boring old
rhetoric, its conditional tentativeness
and factual bankruptcy, that crucifies
him (no historical reference intended).

— Kerri Kwinter
Toronto

Editorial Response

The above criticism of the 'ad' on the
inside front cover of the last issue of
FUSE is valuable in exposing an
insinuation of racism that was not
immediately apparent to me — or I
think the majority of our readers. It
would seem that the rhetorical devices
of racism are so deeply entrenched in
our culture that they can be in-

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advertently adopted by those whose intent is its opposition.

I know that the intent of the author of the piece was "to expose the Bronfmans ownership of Space Research Inc. and that company's involvement in the development, manufacturing and shipment of arms to South Africa (among other countries). The objective was to condemn an independent corporate foreign policy (with a military component) that functions outside the jurisdiction of our elected (and theoretically answerable) government."

In listing so many other 'facts' the ad unfortunately shifted the focus away from this criminal support (for profit) of the inhumane and corrupt regime of the South African government. As managing editor of this magazine I do take the responsibility for not having recognized and thoroughly discussed these errors of tone and emphasis which have been raised and I offer my apology to those who have been hurt by this. I do think that a reworking of the 'ad' could have resolved the problems that have come up and so I would not agree that the whole piece deserved the editor's slash.

—Joyce Mason (managing editor)

I'D LIKE TO RAISE THE ISSUE OF the "ad" that appeared on the inside front cover of the last issue of FUSE. I've no dispute with the facts that appeared in the ad, nor the fact that the Bronfman empire's wheeling and dealing should be exposed. But I think that the text, regardless of its intentions, functions to support racism for the following reasons:

We live in a racist culture with active anti-Semitic groups and general anti-Jewish prejudice. Even though FUSE, through its content, provides a non-racist context, this ad is not contextualized toward what I think it is meant to be — the exposure of one of the many capitalist conglomerates who control us.

By mentioning only the Bronfmans, the Rothschild's and the Israeli government's dealings — with not even a hint or reference to non-Jewish money barons — the ad fits neatly into the "Jews run our economy" prejudice which already exists in Canada.

The "ad" does not mention the Israeli's who oppose their government's dealings; it does not mention the Jews who oppose multi-national conglomerates and military funding; it does not mention the Jews who actively oppose apartheid. It's only in a non-racist society that you can attack members of a single race or culture, and not expect that attack to function as ammunition for prejudice against an entire race.

I think that if I took a bunch of FUSE covers to an anti-Semitic meeting, I'd be welcomed with open arms. I'm also concerned that this ad, printed separately from FUSE — authorized by a previous publication credit from FUSE and by an association of artists and writers — would function as anti-Semitic literature with some clout.

—Lynne Fernie (Contributing Editor)

IN VIEW OF THE LETTERS AND editorial responses surrounding the "Seagram's ad", I think it would be useful to clarify some of the events that led up to its publication and perhaps point to what has become an unfortunate traffic jam of political priorities.

A group was formed and the ad prepared by me following the mobilizing work of journalists, writers and musicians within Toronto's Black community that are organizing boycotts against entertainers who have performed in South Africa. This also coincided with the publication, in issues of *Counterspy* and *This Magazine* of articles on the operations of Space Research Inc., its Canadian ownership (by the Bronfmans) and its

shipment of arms to South Africa. We were also dismayed at the almost total silence which met Carling O'Keefe's (controlled by the Rembrandt Group of Johannesburg) sponsorship of this summer's Police Picnic — attended by 30,000 people to see acts like James Brown and Sunny Ade. As a number of corporations launder their public images with comparative ease through the sponsorship of cultural events, renewed opposition seemed most necessary. As the Committee of Writers, Artists and Musicians Against Apartheid is preparing future events and actions I should emphasize that the members of this group are not anti-semitic.

While the letter writers provide constructive insights, I would like to point out that the style of the ad was based on the relatively common and recognizable genre of "corporate responsibility" advertising not, as Ms. Kwinter suggests, the comparatively esoteric *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*.

Any Jewish involvement in corporate irresponsibility and racism becomes, of course, a delicate issue and is often avoided in the Left press because of the anticipated accusations of anti-semitism. The effect is often to silence discussion and unfortunately raises the possibility of a competitive hierarchy of anti-racism. *Contrast*, for example, has all but ceased criticism of Israel's ties to South Africa in view of a justifiable fear of an anti-semitic backlash.

One of FUSE's most basic political positions (which it shares with the majority of independent publications) is anti-racism. I am now led to conclude that the forum for this discussion is not adequately met by either fake corporate ad's or (necessarily) incomplete letters. I hope that among others, FUSE will editorially meet this particular challenge.

—Clive Robertson, Toronto

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